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RAW

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 1996

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PULP PILLMAN!

An UNCENSORED interview!

Page 12

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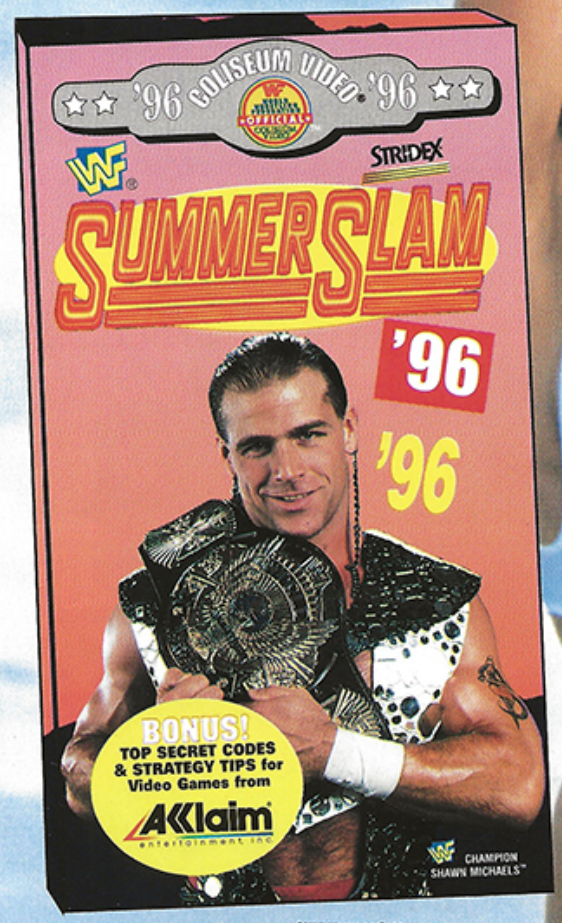

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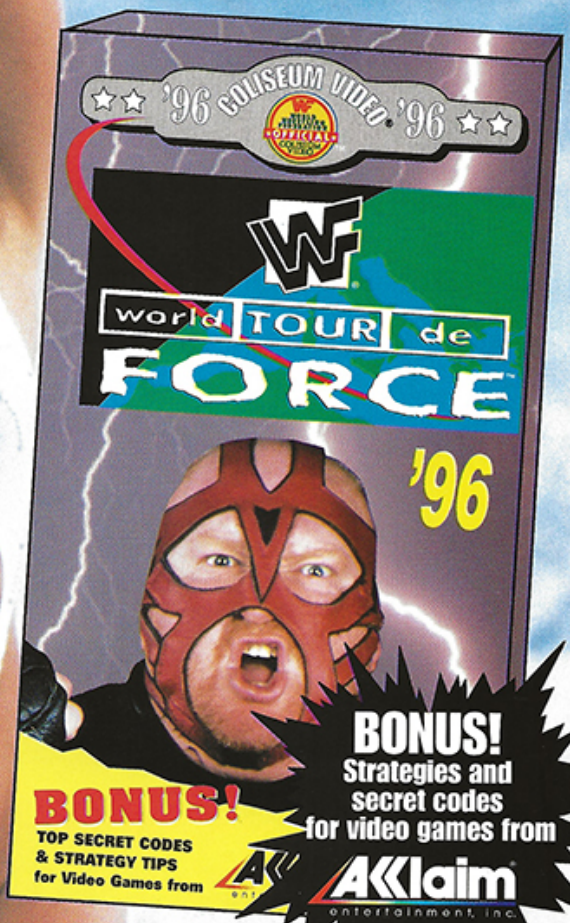

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WWF RAW
November/December 1996 ▪ Volume 1 ▪ Number 4

CONTENTS

On The Cover

Sunny shares her secrets like never before.

Cover photo by Randy O'Rourke

Features

12 Pillman Uncensored!!!
13 Questions For The Time Bomb

17 Sid Shoots From The Hip
Eudy Tells It Like It Is

21 RAW Exclusive Photo!
Ahmed Johnson

22 It's Time... It's Time!
Vader Speaks

26 "Kanadian" KO
Ray Rougeau Drops Owen Hart

30 Sunny's Fantasies!
There Are Some Things Words Can't Descibe

36 Handsome Jimmy & Luscious Johnny
Remembering The Valiants

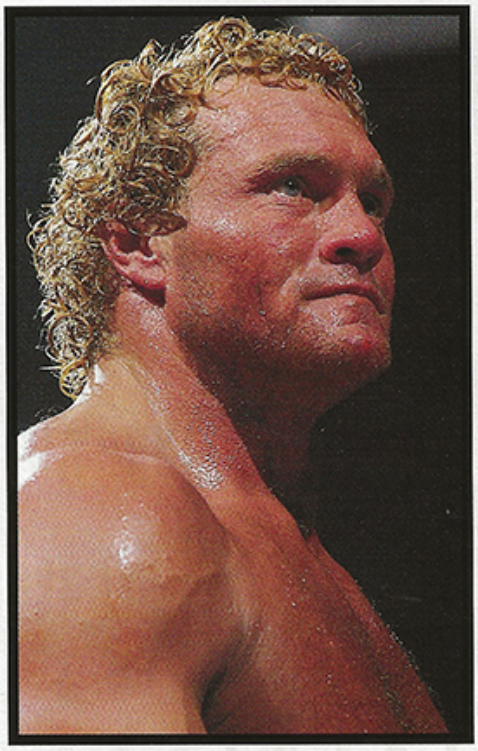
42 Limited Edition Collector's Series Preview–SHOWDOWN!
Settling The Score... The Hard Way
The Undertaker vs. Mankind/Exclusive Shots From Boiler Room!!!

48 And, Being Led To The Ring By...
Ranking The Federation's Best Managers

54 RAW Exclusive Photo
Shawn Michaels vs. Goldust—Ladder Match

56 The Night The Belt Changed Hands
Bret "Hit Man" Hart vs. Mr. Perfect

60 Fantasy Warfare
Pillman vs. Austin



The "untold" story of Sid. ▪ Page 17

Departments

4 The Informer
Strictly Confidential

6 Letters From The Fans
Interacting With The WWF

10 Venom Raw
By Vic Venom

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WARNING WARNING WARNING

This magazine contains nothing but high-risk, nail-biting, off-the-top-rope, uncensored MAYHEM! It is only recommended for the serious World Wrestling Federation fan! May prove to be far too much to handle for the lighter-weight fan, pregnant women and those who suffer from high blood pressure.

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WWF RAW

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1241 East Main Street
Stamford, CT 06902
(203) 352-8600

World Wrestling Federation RAW (ISSN 1087-0164) is published bimonthly by TITANSPORTS, Inc. © 1996 TitanSports Inc., 1241 East Main Street, Stamford, CT 06902 and published in Canada by Titan Promotions Inc. (GST No. R121893385), 2 Lansing Square, Suite 502, Willowdale, Ontario, Canada M2J 4P8. Basic subscription rates are $11.97 for 6 issues and $19.97 for 12 issues for U.S. and U.S. possessions. Canadian rates are $17.62 for 6 issues and $31 for 12 issues including 7% GST. Foreign rates are $17.97 for 6 issues and $31.97 for 12 issues. ALL ORDERS ARE PAYABLE IN U.S. FUNDS ONLY. NO FOREIGN CREDIT ORDERS WILL BE ACCEPTED. Periodical Postage Pending at Stamford, CT and other additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to WWF Raw, TitanSports, Inc., P. O. Box 394, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0394. Printed by R.R. Donnelley & Sons, Mattoon, Illinois Manufacturing Division. Distributed by Kable News Company Inc., 11 West 42nd St., New York, NY 10036.

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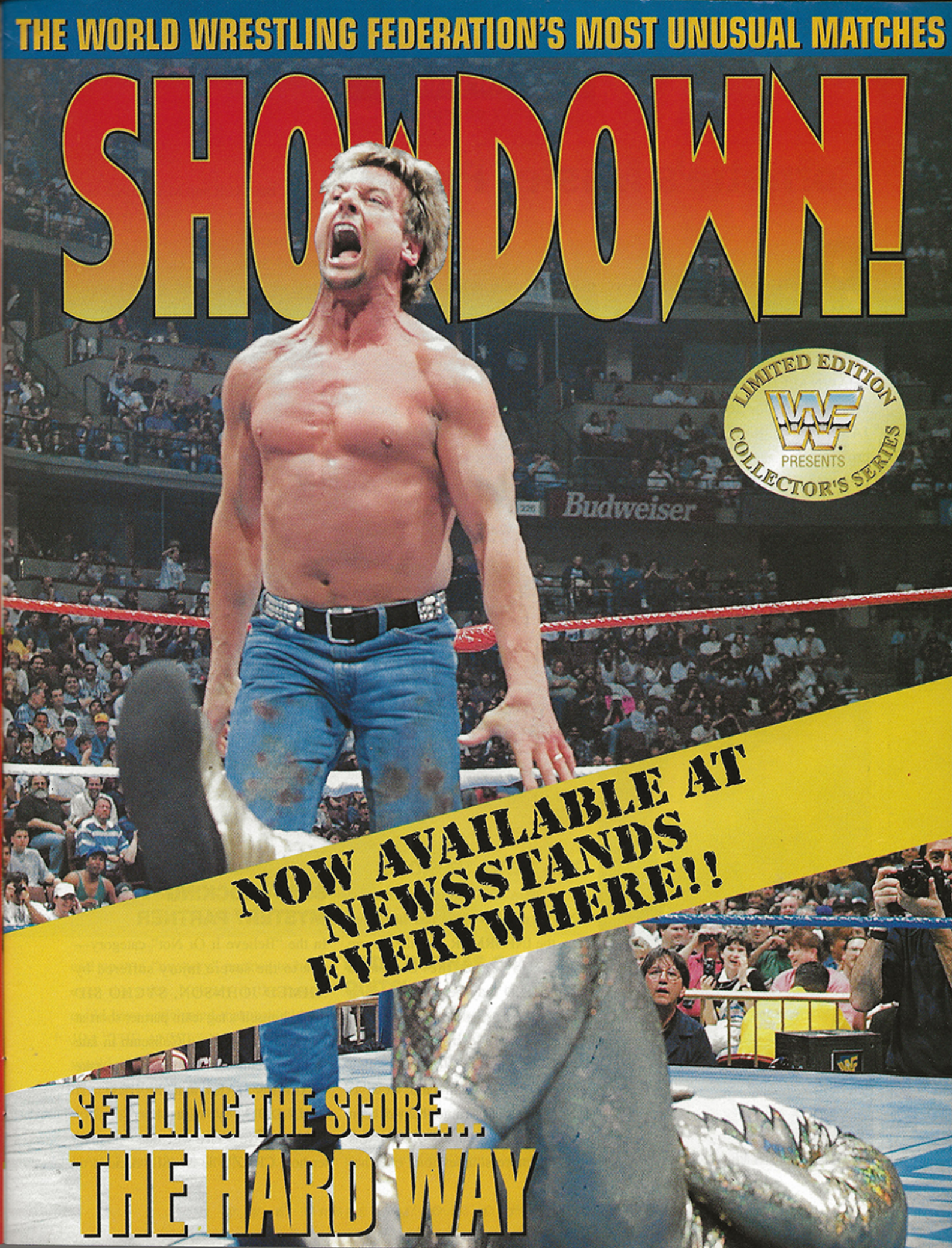
THE WORLD WRESTLING FEDERATION'S MOST UNUSUAL MATCHES

SHOWDOWN!



SETTLING THE SCORE...

THE HARD WAY

Cornette's Master Plan

Don't think for one second that the Man They Call VADER isn't going to be getting another shot at World Wrestling Federation Champion SHAWN MICHAELS. Informants have informed me, the INFORMER, that JAMES E. CORNETTE is not only crowing that there indeed will be a re-match, BUT he claims to have a "master plan" that will guarantee VADER the Federation Championship by the year's end! What does Cornette have in store for the Heartbreak Kid? Maybe the following quote that he sprayed all over my source will give us more insight.

"I'm guaranteein' you that by the time that jolly old fat man gets his fat butt down your chimney, Vader will be the World Wrestling Federation Champion," barked Cornette. "We figured out Shawn Michaels' weakness. We figured out the one spot where he is the most vulnerable. Shawn Michaels has NO IDEA what we have in store for him—we're gonna hit him where it hurts most of all!!!" HMMM?

TAG TEAM TERROR!!!

Now, here's an interesting rumor: One of my top spies has informed me, the INFORMER, that the bizarre GOLDUST and the demented MANKIND may be contemplating shelving their singles' careers for the time being, in order to concentrate solely on the World Wrestling Federation Tag Team Title. Now, as of press time, this rumor has not been confirmed—or denied—BUT I was told by more sources than one that PAUL BEARER and MARLENA have been meeting behind "closed doors" on a consistent basis over the past few weeks? So now, the question remains: Business... or pleasure? In my opinion, it could be either... OR BOTH!!!

Get Savio a Suit?!

As I mentioned in the *World Wrestling Federation Magazine*, I, the INFORMER, am being led to believe that CLARENCE MASON is desperately trying to assemble his own stable of Federation superstars, which I hear he may intend to label—"The FIRM". Whereas that in itself may not be "shocking" news, this might be: among the contracts that MASON supposedly has laid out on the table are—STONE COLD STEVE AUSTIN, HUNTER HEARST-HELMSLEY AND... SAVIO VEGA!!! You say that SAVIO might be wishful thinking on the part of MASON? Possibly... possibly not. SAVIO has all the tools to be a top contender in the World Wrestling Federation, the only thing that seems to constantly hold him back is his vicious temper. A manager or, in this case, MASON might just be able to "tame" that fire.

SID'S SHOCKING MYSTERY PARTNER

In the "Believe It Or Not" category—due to the severe injury suffered by AHMED JOHNSON, SYCHO SID found himself a tag team partner short at Long Island's Nassau Coliseum in late August. Being that the decision to take on OWEN HART and the BRITISH BULLDOG by himself probably wouldn't have been a wise one—no matter how CRAZY he is—SID decided to

call upon a "mystery" partner to help even the sides. Nobody in the house could have anticipated that it would be JIM "THE ANVIL" NEIDHART who would come strutting through the curtain. Will this shocking supposed "one-time" appearance have any bearing on the future plans of BRET "HIT MAN" HART? Only time will tell.

BODY DONNAS CALL IT QUITS!

After failing to re-attain their status as World Wrestling Federation Tag Team Champions, SKIP and ZIP, The BODY DONNAS, have decided to call it quits.

"I don't know," said a dejected ZIP. "I just don't think my brother got over the whole SUNNY thing. She was a big part of his life and when she cold-heartedly dumped him... he just never seemed to get over it. I really believed that when the fans began to rally around us he would forget. But he couldn't."

As of press time, Zip plans to resume his career as a single, while also training rookies looking to break in. Meanwhile, Skip's future remains uncertain. ■

Letters to the Editor:

Stone Cold = No Gold?

Letter

Dear Editor,

Let me first say this: Stone Cold Steve Austin is the greatest WRESTLER in the World Wrestling Federation, BAR NONE! The title of *King of the Ring* speaks for itself. So, I ask, why is this man not receiving any kind of a title shot? Are Federation officials afraid he will destroy the Heartbreak Kid Shawn Michaels? The British Bulldog and Vader had their turns, now let the King have a crack at opening a can of "Whoop Ass" and taking home the Gold!

Evan Kickly
Charlotte, NC

BEHIND EVERY SUCCESSFUL SUPERSTAR

Fax

Dear Editor,

I've had enough! The managers in the sport of kings never get any credit whatsoever. If some of the Federation superstars didn't have someone to make all the decisions for them, they would probably end up in the slums! For example, if Shawn Michaels didn't receive the advice of "Super Sock" Jose Lothario prior to *WrestleMania XII*, you can bet his dream would NEVER have been achieved. Sunny has made a dent the size of the Grand Canyon in the Tag Team Scene and Captain Lou Albano was the brains behind virtually EVERY champion from the late '70s to the mid '80s! Managers are the key to success for any Federation superstar!

Joel Goldfarb
Rochester, NY

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- FRENCH/CANADIAN REPORT: ***OPTION 7***
- POST-MATCH INTERVIEWS: ***OPTION 8***

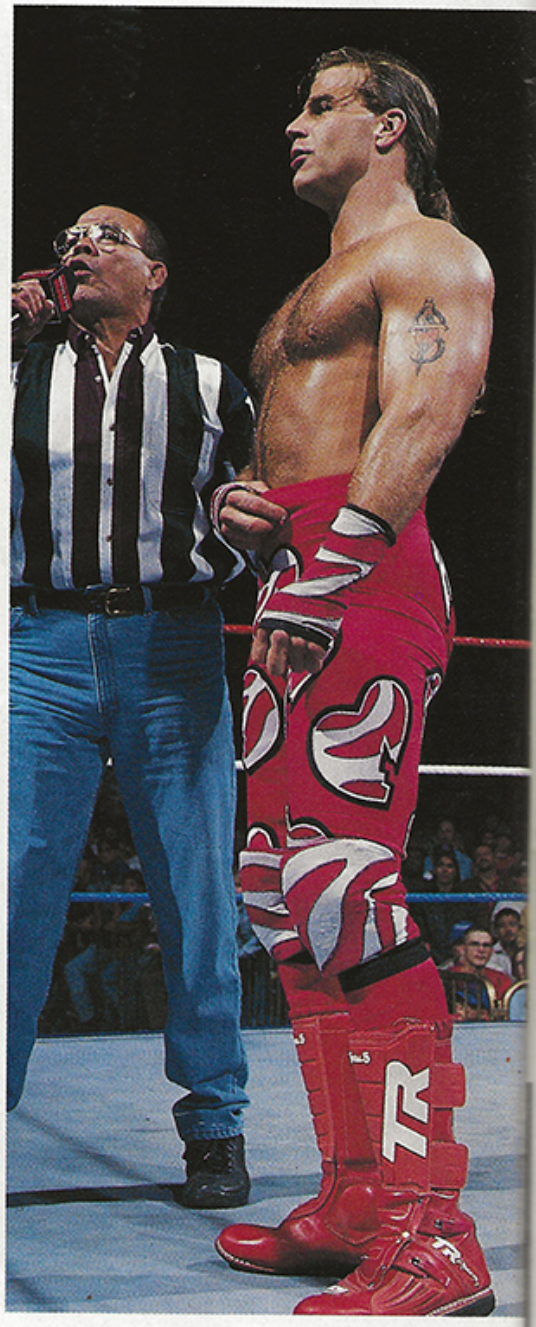
HE SAID, SHE SAID

Fax

Dear Editor,

This is to all the female readers who have been complaining about the beautiful female valets who are doing spreads in the *RAW Magazine*! Hey, if you don't like it, don't read the damn article! Now, Russo may not like that, but I think there are other articles in the magazine that can also be enjoyed... and the teenagers with hormones the size of baseballs can enjoy the spread! If the women want Shawn Michaels, go buy *Playgirl*. Other than that, shut your traps!

William Ingle
Richmond, VA



THE MAN...THE MYTH... THE LEGEND

E-Mail

Dear Editor,

Thumbs up to the World Wrestling Federation for allowing an announcer like Kevin Kelly the chance to rise to the top of the Federation Announcing Team! Obviously, this guy KNOWS what he is talking about, and he doesn't make it a point to rip the other superstars like Jerry "The King" Lawler does. Kevin provides the right mix of humor, knowledge and criticism that reminds me of the days of Gordon Solie! Hopefully, if Kevin keeps it up, he can go on to become the greatest announcer of all time!

Jon Kleinburg
Joklein@aol.com

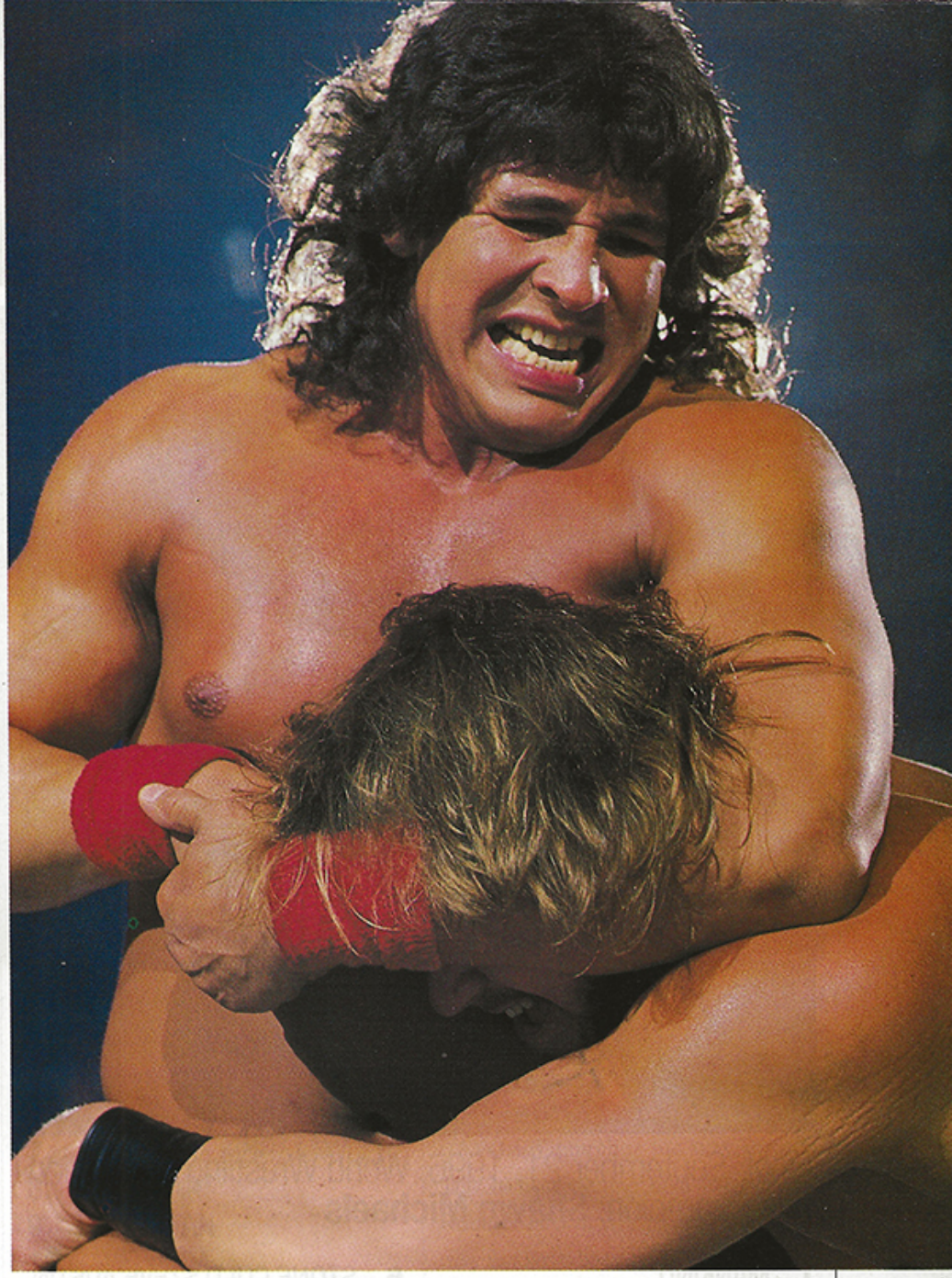
YO...REMEMBER THAT SANTANA?

Letter

Dear Editor,

Let me just say that I love the *RAW Magazine*, particularly the section entitle "Yo, Do You Remember That Guy?" In the future, I feel that including Tito Santana in this column would be an enlightening read for those who pursue *RAW* on a regular basis. He was one of the all-time great high-flyers of the ring and the fact that he never turned against the fans was a great inspiration to many fans worldwide. I, for one, would enjoy reading about El Matador's squared circle success!

Amy A. Head
Bethel, CT



Tito Santana was truly one of the greatest Intercontinental Champions in the history of the World Wrestling Federation. In a future issue of *RAW*, we will be sure to highlight El Matador in our "Yo, Do You Remember That Guy?" feature.

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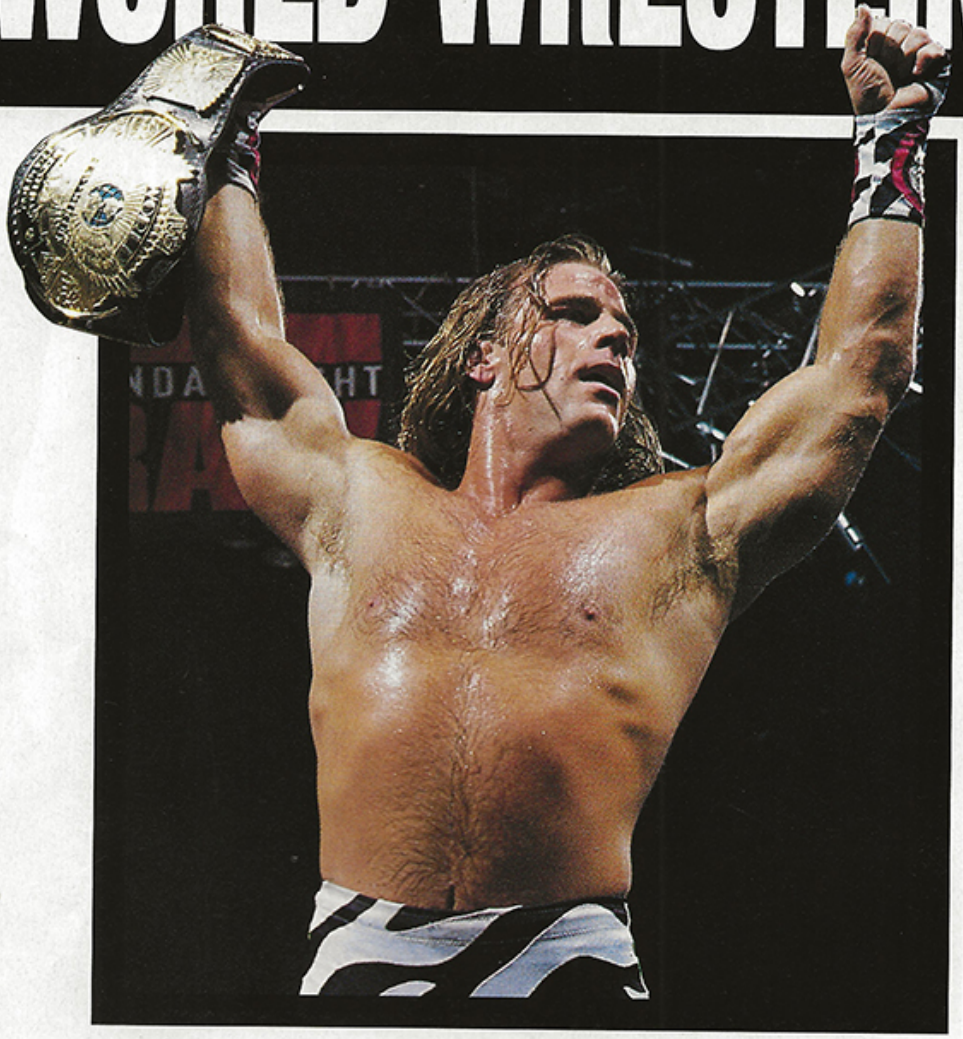
WORLD WRESTLING FEDERA



As of September 21, 1996, World Wrestling Federation Title Champion: **Shawn Michaels**

1. MANKIND
2. VADER
3. WILDMAN MARC MERO
4. GOLDUST
5. FAAROOQ
6. STONE COLD STEVE AUSTIN
7. SYCHO SID
8. UNDERTAKER
9. OWEN HART
10. THE SULTAN

ANALYSIS

There is no doubt in anybody's mind that MANKIND is the No. 1 contender going into September's *In Your House*. If you combine the momentum of his two impressive and consecutive Pay-Per-View victories over the Undertaker, along with the added expertise supplied by new "soul mate" Paul Bearer, the question now is: Can anybody stop him? He may have lost his *SummerSlam* title shot to Shawn Michaels, but the man they call VADER beat the Champion on two—possibly three—occasions before Michaels pinned him. Does VADER deserve another title shot? Without question! And he just may get it, if Mankind comes up a few fingers short at Mind Games. As of press time, WILDMAN MARC MERO got by Stone Cold Steve Austin and Slammy Award-Winning Owen Hart to advance to the finals of the Intercontinental Title Tournament. Those impressive victories alone rocket Mero to the No. 3 position. Realizing this is going to be highly controversial, in my opinion, GOLDUST ranks as the No. 4 contender for the Federation Title. Even though the Champion Shawn Michaels defeated the bizarre one on USA's *Championship Friday*, Goldust gave the Heartbreak Kid all he could handle and was possibly only seconds away from the Federation Title. If you combine that feat with Goldie's *SummerSlam* victory over Mero and his *Monday Night Raw* battle royal win, you would have to agree that he is deserving of such a high ranking. Like MARC MERO, FAAROOQ also advanced to the finals of the IC Tournament. Even though Faarooq had to get by Savio Vega and Sid, in my opinion, his victories weren't as impressive as Mero's. STONE COLD STEVE AUSTIN drops to No. 6 thanks to the upset loss he suffered at the hands of Mero in the tournament, while SID comes in at No. 7 thanks to his tournament loss to Faarooq. The UNDERTAKER drops to No. 8 courtesy of Mankind, while Owen Hart, who scored an impressive victory over Savio Vega at *SummerSlam* and newcomer The SULTAN, who manhandled Jake "The Snake" Roberts on *Monday Night Raw*, round out the field.

TION'S ~~OFFICIAL~~ RANKINGS

World Wrestling Federation Intercontinental Title Champion: **Vacant**

1. GOLDUST
2. FAAROOQ
3. MANKIND
4. WILDMAN MARC MERO
5. STONE COLD STEVE AUSTIN
6. SYCHO SID
7. JERRY "THE KING" LAWLER
8. OWEN HART
9. THE SULTAN
10. SAVIO VEGA

ANALYSIS

Why does GOLDUST top my list? It's simple. After losing the Intercontinental Title to Ahmed Johnson at *King of the Ring*, Goldie never received a rematch. Then, to add insult to injury, he wasn't even given a slot in the Intercontinental Title Tournament. Until Goldust gets what he deserves, he is going to be my No. 1 contender. Like him or not, FAAROOQ has to come in as No. 2, simply for putting the ex-Champion Ahmed Johnson out of action. MANKIND fingers his way to No. 3 even though for the time being he has one title, and one title only, on his mind. Being that he has made his way to the finals, WILDMAN MARC MERO jumps to the No. 4 spot and may very well walk away with it all! Even though his tournament loss to the Wildman was by DQ, a loss is still a loss, which is why STONE COLD STEVE AUSTIN drops three slots in the rankings to No. 5. And, it was also a disappointing DQ loss to Faarooq that roadblocked SID from jumping to the top of the pack. Now, here's one you're going to hate—JERRY "THE KING" LAWLER marches his way into the Top 10 by upsetting Jake "The Snake" Roberts at *SummerSlam*. The victory may not have been pretty, but it doesn't matter—it was a victory. OWEN HART was hot and cold as he beat Savio Vega at *SummerSlam* and lost to Mero in the tournament, while The SULTAN not only knocked Jake out of the Top 10, but positioned himself at No. 9 due to an impressive *Raw* victory over the man from Stone Mountain. The slumping SAVIO VEGA rounds out the field at No. 10 on reputation, and reputation alone. The Caribbean Legend desperately needs a victory, and he just may be ripe to turn his fortune around. ■

Wrestling "SMARTS" Why they are such Horses' !@#$%!

By Vic Venom

(DISCLAIMER: THE OPINIONS AND VIEWS EXPRESSED IN THIS COLUMN AREN'T NECESSARILY THOSE OF THE WORLD WRESTLING FEDERATION OR TITANSPORTS.)

I gotta tell you, as much as I love what I do, there are some parts of my job that outright BITE!!!

Believe me, the sports-entertainment business isn't all it's cracked up to be! It's not all glamour and glory, like many of you wannabes out there tend to believe! I mean, have you ever had to deal with white collar misfits on a daily basis?! Everything is a stinkin' meeting with these guys!!! AND, if they're not in an "official" meeting, they're in a "makeshift" meeting discussing whether or not to have an "official" meeting!!! So many people doing so little!!! What an out-and-out crime—A WHITE COLLAR crime!!! And, the money these BOZOS get paid!!! Forget about it!!! Talk about ripping your employer off, these butt-munchers should be payin' rent just for the space they're wastin'!!!

But, enough about them. What goes around... comes around and, in the end, they will ALL get theirs! What I want to talk about now is something far more disturbing than a shirt and a tie. Something that I am faced with every single, solitary day! No, there is no place to run... no place to hide. Much like empty beer bottles—THEY'RE EVERYWHERE!!! What I'm talkin' about is the pitiful, putrid, pathetic... WRESTLING SMART!!!

That's right—I SAID IT!!! The term that has been "taboo" to every sports-entertainment telecast and publication since the inception of the solid arm bar!!! Now, since I realize there are many "normal" fans out there reading this Pulitzer Prize-winning column, let me explain to you exactly what a wrestling "smart" is:

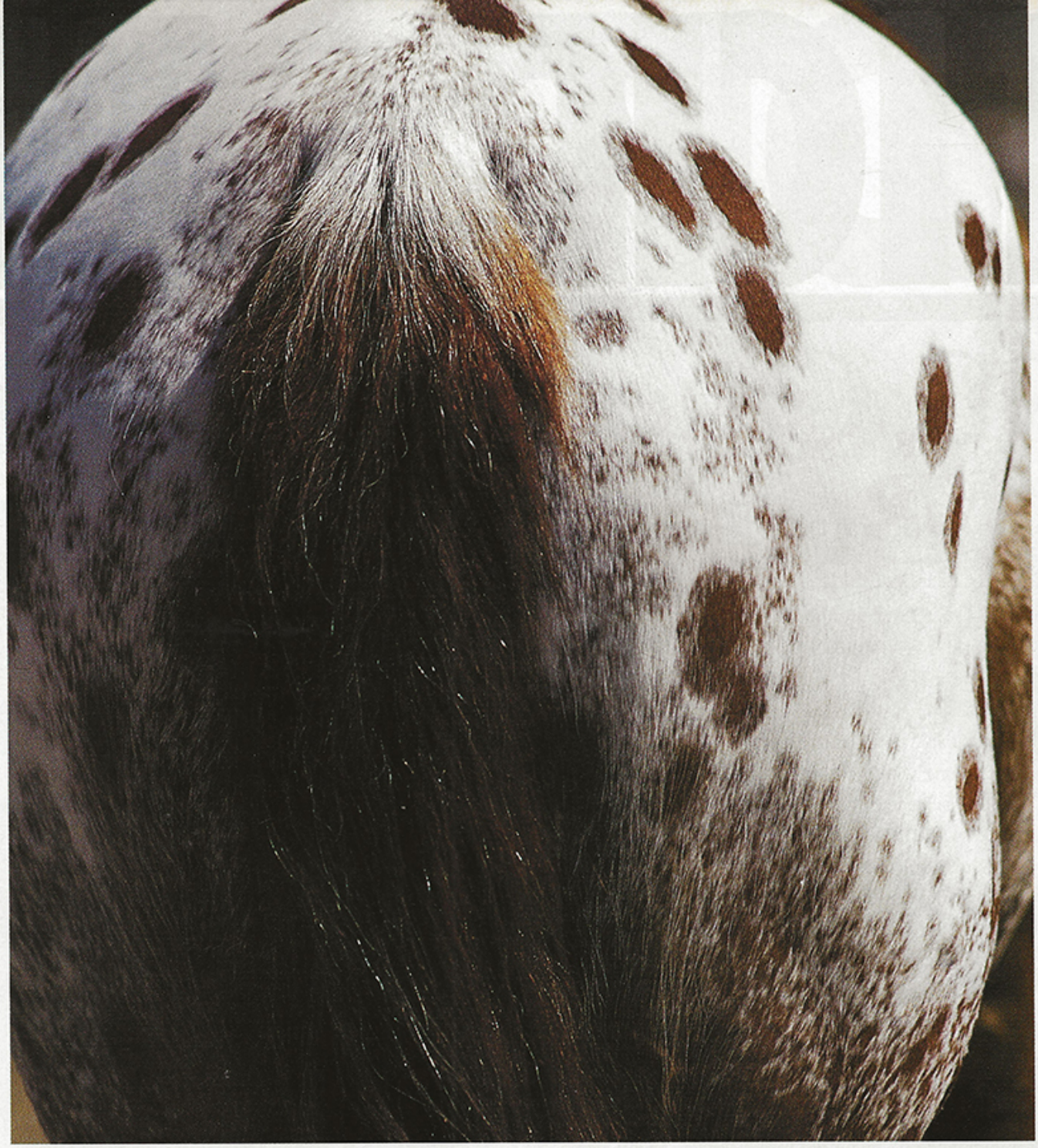
PHRASE: Wrestling Smart

MEANING: Clueless—A Person Who Doesn't Have A Clue.

That's right, for all you smarts out there—and, I know you're out there because it's Friday night and there's no sign of a date... ANYWHERE—you are clueless!!! You think you know everything there is to know about the World Wrestling Federation—and—I'M AFRAID TO ASK WHY? Not being legitimately associated with the Federation in any way, shape or form—how can you claim to have the inside track?

No, I'm not talking about the avid, educated Federation fan, or the cyber-head on the internet who slings gossip as a way of entertaining him, or herself. There's nothing wrong with that—that's healthy! I mean, hell, I pick up the *National Enquirer* when I'm standing at the check-out counter, there's nothing wrong with some honest-to-goodness DIRT! As a matter of fact, I love reveling in other people's misery! I bathe in tears of sorrow—it cleanses my soul!!! However, even the *Enquirer* has some level of validity. The scum I'm talking about are extremely LONELY individuals—you know, the ones who don't have lives—who BS FOR A LIVING!!! Their only way of earning coin is by RIPPING OTHERS OFF!

If you're reading this magazine, you've probably seen them. They're called "dirt sheets". There—another term that has never been used publicly until now. Dirt sheets are basically rags full of BS and hearsay that wrestling smarts write, then sell to the general sports-entertainment fan. Now, keep in mind, the smarts who write this !@#$% ARE NOT in any way associated with TitanSports. Therefore, their information usually comes second—third—fourth-hand!!! Now, I ask you—how can these life forms call themselves SMARTS—when they are too DUMB to figure out how to get the information directly from the source itself—the World Wrestling Federation? True, the Federation



Pictured above is your typical wrestling-smart dirt sheet writer. Hey, at least the puke has his mother's good looks.

doesn't just openly give information to these creatures, but that's only because they've been burned by them so many times in the past! HOWEVER, if they were just a wee bit more responsible, maybe the Federation would trust them, first... then eventually communicate with them, second. Believe me, it has nothing to do with Vince McMahon not wanting "bad things" said about him—because I'VE RIPPED HIM RIGHT HERE—IN HIS OWN MAGAZINE! It has to do with Vince McMahon wanting journalists to be HONEST and FAIR. Unfortunately, since neither of those two words can be found in the vocabulary of dirt-sheet writers, there is one thing—and one thing only—left for these maggots to do—MAKE THE !@#$ UP!!!

What's my point? Simple. Don't believe everything you read and hear concerning the World Wrestling Federation, because most of the time it's all a bunch of HORSE-!@#$%!!!

And, as for you smarts who choose to rob the fans via 1-900... I'll deal with you later!!!

Later, pukes!!! ■

TICK... TIC

13 Questions For Brian Pillman

Interview Conducted By Vince Russo

EDITOR: Prior to your coming to the World Wrestling Federation, you spent the majority of your career at World Championship Wrestling. Word had it that at WCW you had a problem getting along with the powers that be. Would you care to elaborate on that?

PILLMAN: Yeah, I had a lot of problems with the "powers that..." Well, they thought they were the "powers that be". Little did they know that they had no power over me and that's what caused the problem. They couldn't control Brian Pillman. That bothered them and that's why they wanted me out of WCW as soon as possible.

EDITOR: Brian, let's shift gears for a minute and talk about the tragic car accident that has left you at least "temporarily" disabled. Can you tell us what happened?

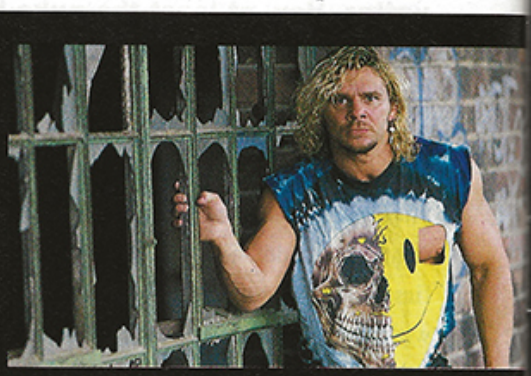
PILLMAN: Doing 70 m.p.h. in an open-air Hummer, I was run off the road by a drunk driver. I hit a tree stump, flew straight up in the air—coming down nose first—and was ejected from the vehicle. The Hummer went on to do two complete flips and I landed 75 feet from the vehicle. I suffered a shattered leg and several broken bones in my face.

EDITOR: With such serious injuries, when "realistically" can we expect to see Brian Pillman back in the ring?

PILLMAN: "Realistically", everyone's got to understand that Brian Pillman is a world-class athlete. Most people would have died in that car wreck. In fact, just about anybody would have. I'll be back sooner than all the experts and all the pundits who are saying... whatever. I am saying that you are guaranteed to see me come back, but it's going to be a surprise. It's going to be a shock!

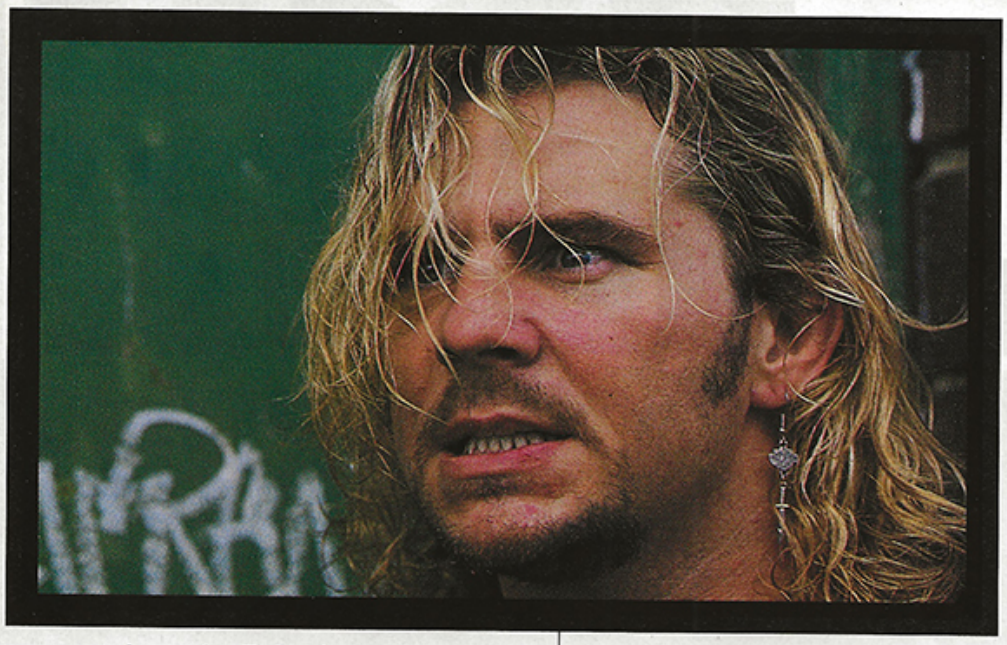
EDITOR: At about the same time you signed with the World Wrestling Federation, free agency was beginning to find its way into the world of sports-entertainment. As a matter of fact, many say that you may have very well been the greatest sought after free agent in history. Eventually, you chose to sign with the World Wrestling Federation... why?

PILLMAN: Obviously the World Wrestling Federation had a lot more to offer Brian Pillman. I knew that I wouldn't be shackled by the constraints of censorship that I had been subjected to in other wrestling organizations in the past. And I also knew that the World Wrestling Federation would give me the chance to get exposure worldwide, not on a limited scope like in



CK... TICK

(Warning: This interview is both uncensored and unedited and may be found extremely offensive.)



those other Federations. I can now carry my message all across the world. That was the deciding factor in my decision.

EDITOR: Following your departure from WCW, you went and worked for a small promotion out of Philadelphia called Extreme Championship Wrestling (ECW). What are your comments regarding that organization?

PILLMAN: I think they suck. They are based on violence, yet they don't know what the true meaning of violence really is. They like to think they do. They perpetrate a lot of "so called" violence on their television shows, but let the truth be known—I was the most violent individual who ever worked for that promotion. I think a nice swan song for my official departure from there is to do something REALLY malicious and TRULY violent.

EDITOR: When you first showed up in ECW, you threatened to "urinate" on the first few rows of fans during a live interview. Would you have proceeded to do so if you weren't stopped by police? Or was that just a "manner of speaking" in which Brian Pillman chose to express himself?

PILLMAN: I would have #&!%ed in that hell hole! That arena should be condemned! It is a quagmire of depravity the likes of which I have never seen! #&!%ing in that ring wouldn't have even done it justice! I might have even taken it one step further!

EDITOR: I don't know if I can get away with saying that in the magazine, but I'll try anyway. Now let's talk for a second about WCW. Now that you have worked for both promotions, how would you compare the WCW to the World Wrestling Federation?

PILLMAN: There is obviously a higher standard of production and professionalism here in the World Wrestling Federation. WCW was a train running out of control. There were far too many chiefs trying to run the camp. Here we've got a direct leader. We know our direction and we have focus. And when you have focus it's easy to channel your thoughts, know where you're going and be the best you can be.

EDITOR: How would you compare Vince McMahon to Eric Bischoff?

PILLMAN: There is no comparison. Vince IS the "man". Eric Bischoff WANTS to be the "man". He's a wannabe Vince McMahon.

EDITOR: In your opinion, who is the most talented athlete you have ever worked with?

PILLMAN: I'd have to say Owen Hart. When I broke in, in Calgary, Alberta, it was a tremendous opportunity for me to work with a talent like Owen Hart. To this day, thanks to the lackluster competition I found in both the WCW and ECW, Owen Hart stands head and shoulders above all the grapplers that I've ever faced.

EDITOR: There are a lot of critics who are calling Brian Pillman the "Rowdy Roddy Piper of the 90s". What are your thoughts on that?

PILLMAN: They can call me whatever they want, as long as they're not within an arm's length of my fist.

EDITOR: Since you first laced up the boots, how do you think the world of sports-entertainment has changed over the years?

PILLMAN: I think we're seeing a tremendous amount of athleticism that we didn't see in past years. The conditioning of the athletes is leaps and bounds ahead of what it was 20 years ago. Also, the television production and promotion of the events is strictly high tech right now.

EDITOR: Where do you think sports-entertainment will be 10 years from now?

PILLMAN: Sports-entertainment is going to seize the opportunity from the other major sports: baseball, basketball, football and hockey. They dropped the ball. They didn't capitalize on their resources. I see the World Wrestling Federation seizing the moment and taking advantage of the situation.

EDITOR: Where will Brian Pillman be?

PILLMAN: I'm gonna be at the top of the heep! That's where I'm gonna be! That's just a statement of fact! ■

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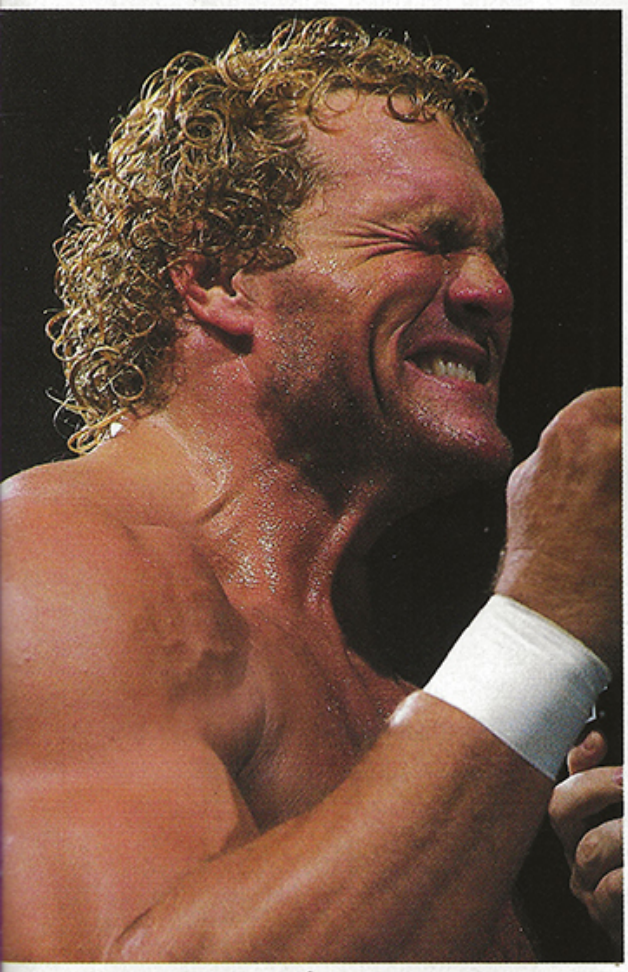
By Keith Elliot Greenberg

Brutally Honest:

A candid visit with Sid



He hasn't lived up to the expectations. He's unfocused. He's a head case who can't stay in one place five minutes before screwing things up.

These are the things that people say behind Sid's back—not just fans and journalists, but many of Sid's fellow wrestlers, men the burly competitor considers his friends. Throughout his career, he's been trailed by a string of bad luck—inopportune injuries, personality conflicts, rash decisions made while he was still maturing as a wrestler and a person. As a result, Sid never won the championship that everyone thought had his name engraved on it. As a result, he's one of the loneliest wrestlers in the sport of kings.

When Sid has triumphed, many other wrestlers were quick to brand the achievement a fluke. When he's failed, his detractors gleefully announced, "I told you so".

"All that stuff that goes on behind the scenes is sometimes a lot more ruthless than what goes on in the ring," he admits, in a rare moment of candor. "A lot of people don't really understand who I am."

Sid has been known by many names: Lord Humongous, when he first started his career, then Sid Vicious, Sid Justice and more recently Sycho Sid. But at his core, the scowling, red-faced bruiser is a farm boy who still lives close to his childhood home in Marion, Arkansas. He began raising wheat, soy beans and rice on a neighbor's spread when he was 13, and continued working the land for 15 years, before the owner sold the farm.

Uncertain of his future, he began training for the sport of kings—under the tutelage of the late Japanese brawler Tojo Yamamoto—at a Memphis gym. Along the way he befriended manager Harvey Wippleman who first brought Sid to the old Continental Wrestling Association in Alabama and later into the World Wrestling Federation.

Other wrestlers start at the bottom, but not Sid. Promoters liked his look and were impressed with his strength. In his very first match in Continental, he was in the main event teaming with the celebrated Austin Idol against Jerry "The King" Lawler and gifted Nick Bockwinkle.

"Me being a little goofy from the south, if somebody did something good, you felt happy for him," Sid reflects. "But from the beginning, the other guys resented me. I remember Harvey com-

ing up to me in the dressing room and saying, 'Everybody's talking about you. They say you haven't paid your dues.' I just didn't understand why people were so jealous."

Maybe it was because Sid was becoming a bona fide star. He battled the late "Texas Tornado" Kerry Von Erich—a future World Wrestling Federation Intercontinental Champion at the time—deep in the heart of the Lone Star state. Then Sid ventured into World Championship Wrestling where big things were predicted for him. Then he punctured his lung in a Free-For-All.

As he was recuperating from surgery in Arkansas, a group of Sid's friends asked him if he wanted to engage in one of his favorite pasttimes—softball. Tired of sitting in the house, Sid agreed. "I don't know how but word got back to World Championship Wrestling," he recalls. "And the next thing I knew, people were saying that I'd rather play softball with my friends than make a living as a professional wrestler."

In 1991, Sid first appeared in the World Wrestling Federation. He shied away from no one, engaging in memorable clashes with the Ultimate Warrior and the Undertaker, and colliding with Hulk Hogan at *WrestleMania VIII*. Then he mysteriously dropped out of sight.

"I never believed I'd make it to the World Wrestling Federation so fast," he reveals, publicly shedding light on his disappearance for the first time. "And I was headlining *WrestleMania*. But I missed Arkansas. I was a boy from the south thrown into something too overwhelming for me. It was just too much too soon."

When Sid was next sighted, the weather was warm, and he was again swinging a bat in Arkansas—lending credence to speculation that he bolted from the mat wars whenever softball season beckoned. Although he played in over 200 games in the summer of 1992—and hit more home runs than all the other teams in his league combined—he still maintains that the timing was a mere coincidence.

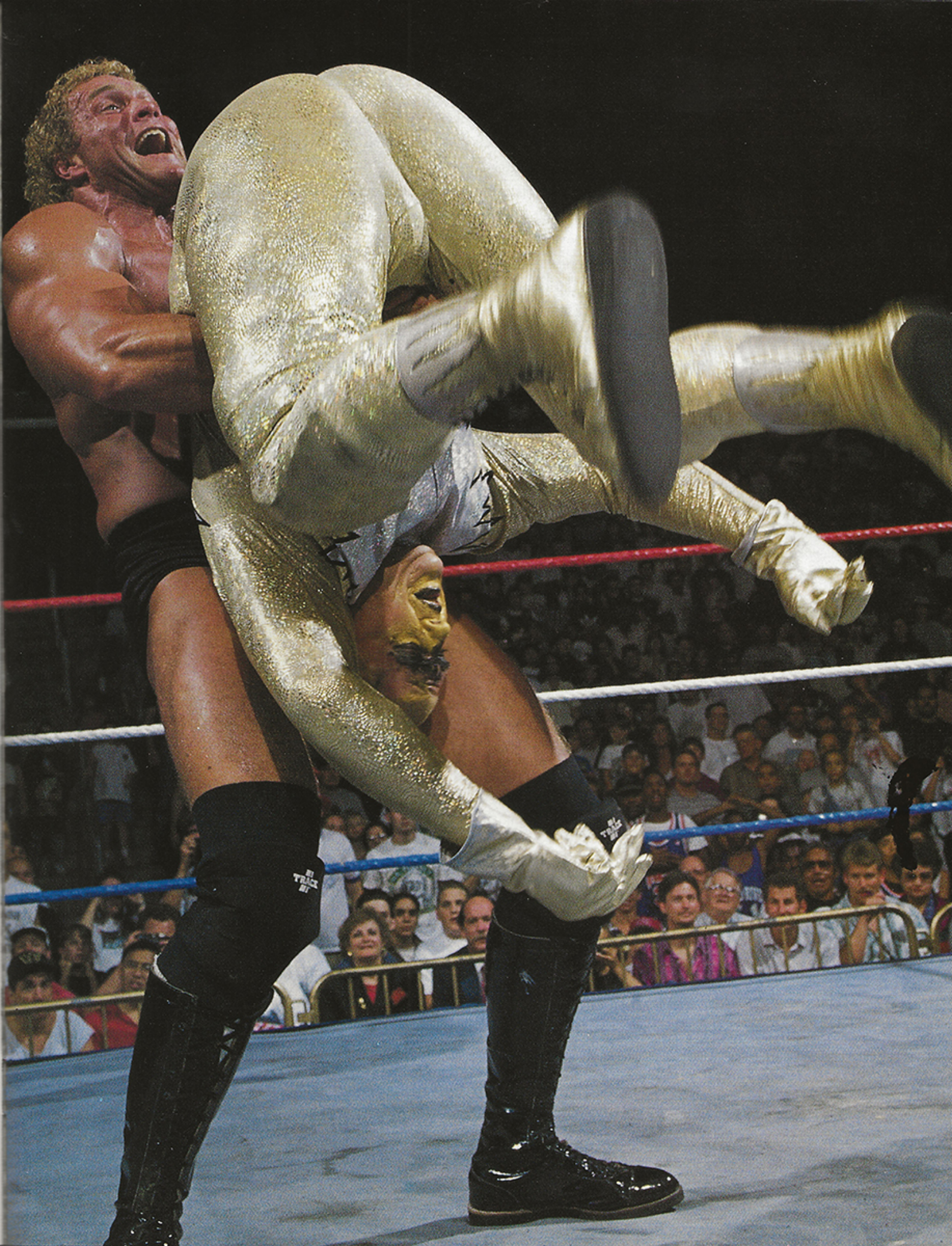
He returned to World Championship Wrestling where he claims other wrestlers again insisted that he was an overrated bum. During a tour of England, he got into a verbal confrontation with Arn Anderson—a former member of the Brain Busters tag team in the World Wrestling Federation—about the state of the company.

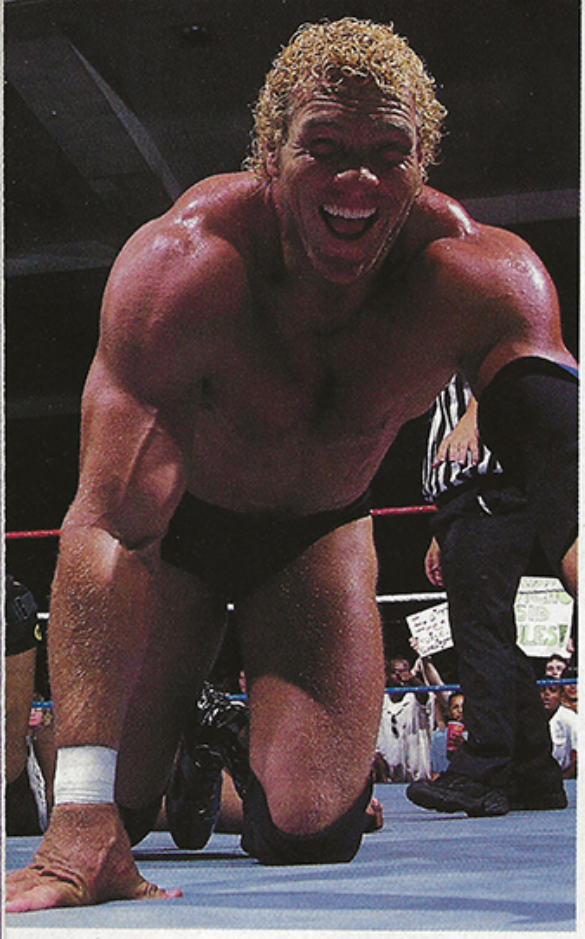
"Maybe I'm too honest," Sid says. "I just don't know how to lie. We were talking about what was wrong with World Championship Wrestling and I said it was stagnant, it wasn't moving forward. I guess he took that personally. He told me I didn't deserve the money I was paid, and I said I drew more money in one night at *WrestleMania VIII* than he did his entire career."

Back at the hotel the angry words continued and eventually escalated to violence. In the midst of the conflict, a pair of scissors was produced and both men were hospitalized with cuts.

Sid contends that he was only defending himself in the fight, and even called Anderson to apologize. "I got his wife on the phone," he says. "I told her I was sorry because I always liked Arn personally. But I wasn't sorry for what I did. It was just my instincts kicking in when I was under attack."

In the aftermath of the much-publicized skirmish, Sid left World Championship Wrestling. "The part of the story you don't know is that we were having





some nasty contract negotiations at the time," he asserts. "They used this incident as an excuse to get rid of me."

Returning to Arkansas without a job, Sid says he couldn't help but feel outraged when he thought of Anderson continuing his career in World Championship Wrestling. "It was like he hadn't done anything wrong," Sid explains. "Here I was layed up. My family was worried about me. I wasn't drawing a salary, and everyone was making me out to be the bad guy."

Fans in the World Wrestling Federation still hadn't forgotten about the tow-headed ruffian who had fascinated them several years earlier. In 1995, he was brought back and soon was in main events again. He now says that Diesel and Razor Ramon—two competitors who have since left the Federation—were envious of his position and embarked on a campaign to undermine him to officials.

"I'm not a stooge who calls the office and reports on other wrestlers," Sid says. "I'm from the old school. That's not how I get approval. I do it through my actions. Everyone who knows me knows that to be true."

He professes that Diesel and Ramon targeted him because "I'm 10 steps above those guys—in the ring, in my appearance, in the way I live my life. Think about the matches I had. I was going in the ring, giving it my all against everybody from Bob Holly to Bam Bam Bigelow to Bret Hart. But Diesel felt threatened by me because I overshadowed him when we wrestled. And that led to a lot of the jealousy."

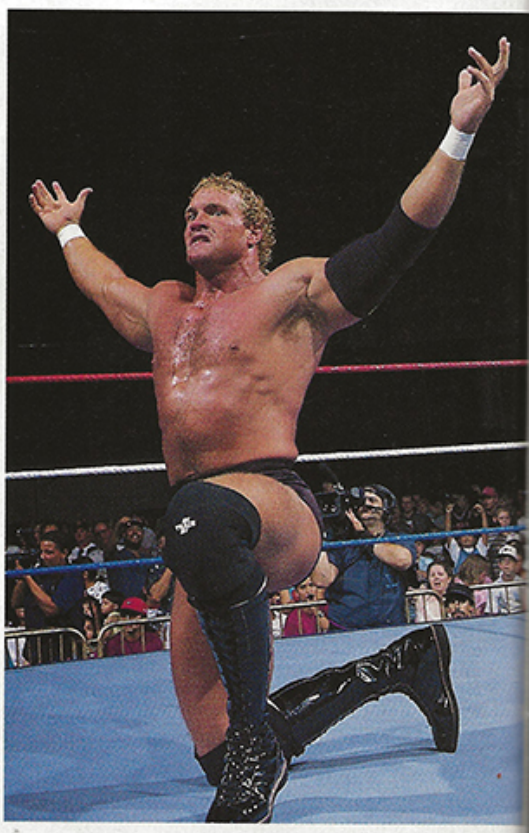
Sid was on a tour when he again was sidelined by injuries. This time, he says he fractured his neck and ruptured three discs. He maintains that the condition caused 80 percent paralysis in his left arm and a doctor advised him to leave the World Wrestling Federation and heal up.

With his entire career in question, he tried not to think of the highs and lows of the squared circle. "I didn't watch one second of wrestling on television," he says. "I wouldn't call any of the other wrestlers even my closest friends. I was upset that I couldn't wrestle and mad that some of the guys were saying that I wasn't injured at all. I just couldn't hear that stuff anymore."

A few months ago, on a broadcast of the Memphis-based United States Wrestling Association (USWA), Sid announced his retirement. "I thought that I wouldn't recover," he remembers. "But my heart and my mind weren't into what I was saying."

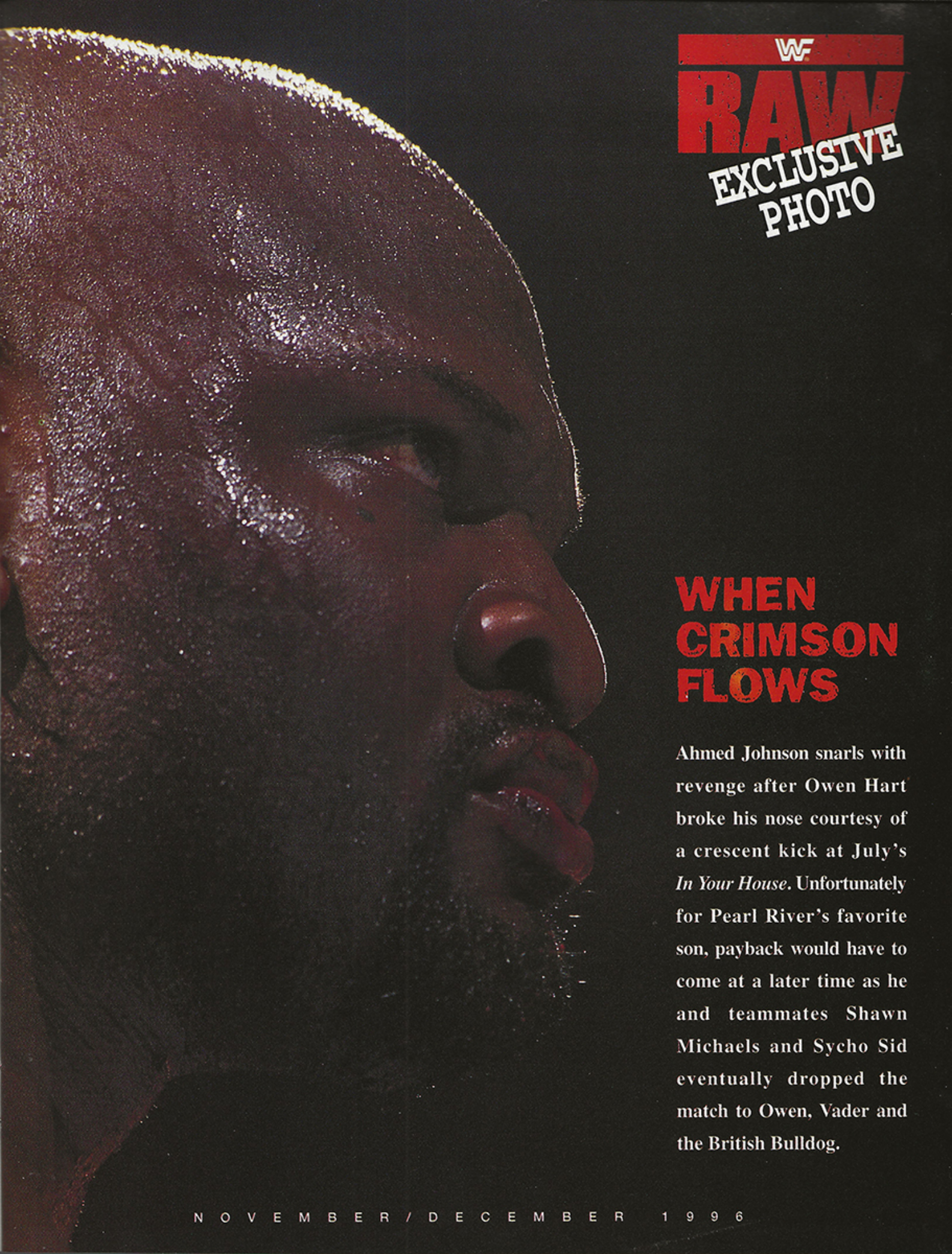
As more time passed, Sid began recuperating quicker than anyone could have guessed. This summer, when the Ultimate Warrior was suspended from the World Wrestling Federation, Sid found an excuse to once again step through the curtain and walk the aisle to the ring.

"The Warrior was supposed to wrestle the British Bulldog at *SummerSlam*," Sid says. "With the Warrior out of commission, the Bulldog was going around saying that nobody was man enough to give him a



good match. That was all I needed to hear. I was back in action."

The rugged gladiator realizes that this might be his last chance to make good on the optimistic predictions of his supporters. "I'm a guy people say lets success slip through his fingers over and over," he concedes. "And three or four times, I was close to the very top when circumstances took me down. It's not going to happen anymore. Nobody works harder than me and this time nobody's going to forget the impact I make on the World Wrestling Federation." ■



WF RAW EXCLUSIVE PHOTO

WHEN CRIMSON FLOWS

Ahmed Johnson snarls with revenge after Owen Hart broke his nose courtesy of a crescent kick at July's *In Your House*. Unfortunately for Pearl River's favorite son, payback would have to come at a later time as he and teammates Shawn Michaels and Sycho Sid eventually dropped the match to Owen, Vader and the British Bulldog.

SHUT UP, JIM CORNETTE!

VADER SPEAKS

BY MICHAEL ARCHER

HE HAS BEEN CALLED THE "BULL OF THE WOODS". HE HAS BEEN CALLED THE BEST BIG MAN IN SPORTS-ENTERTAINMENT TODAY.

HE IS THE "MAN THEY CALL VADER"!

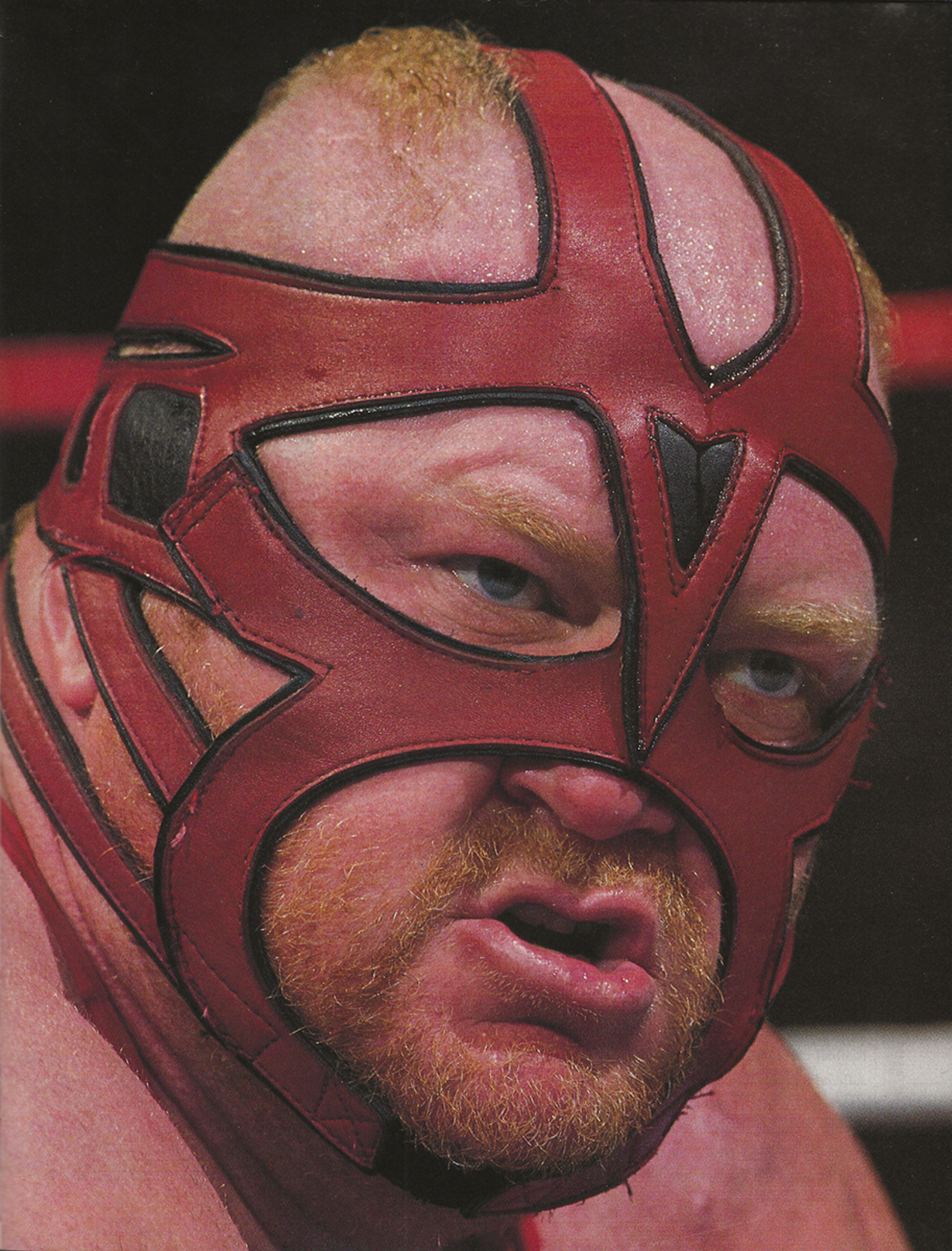
Without a doubt, at six feet five inches and 458 pounds, Vader is one of the most awesome individuals to ever set hoof into the squared circle. The lethal combination of brute strength and unbelievable agility has made him not only a threat but LIFE-THREATENING to any man who has to lace up a pair of boots to make a living. Now, he has invaded the World Wrestling Federation, and he is here for one reason, and one reason only... TOTAL DESTRUCTION!

"I've done everything else there is to do in wrestling and now that I've made it to the big time, I've got one more mountain to climb," Vader exclaims. "If any individual is man enough to stand in my way, then he better be man enough to let his wife support him because disability just ain't gonna cut it!"

Since attaining much of his success early on in his career in Europe and Japan, Vader is considered an international superstar, having won major titles across the globe. His first title reign came in the CWA (Catch Wrestling Alliance), which is run by German great and former AWA (American Wrestling Association) Champion Otto Wanz. "I learned a lot under Otto while I was in Germany," said Vader. "We basically wrestled every night and you had to catch on quick." And, catch on quick he did. Vader went on to hold the CWA Title on four different occasions, while also capturing their Intercontinental Title before moving on to what some would consider greener pastures.

Antonio Inoki of New Japan Pro Wrestling came calling and basically recruited Vader to come to the IWGP (International Wrestling Grand Prix). It was in Japan that the first real effects of Vader began to be felt. While wrestling in Japan, Vader's popularity began to grow, as he went on to hold the IWGP Title on three different occasions. To add to his collection he teamed with Bam Bam Bigelow and won the IWGP Tag Team Title and was also crowned the Tag Tournament Champion with the former World Wrestling Federation Light Heavyweight Champion Tatsumi Fujinami.

But even before his international success, accolades and achievement started early for Vader. Born Leon White, he played high school football in Los Angeles and was named High School All-American in his junior and senior years. He was also selected to both the Sunkist and Parade Team as well as the All-Los Angeles



team, which is made up of a handful of select individuals chosen from over 600 high schools. From there the scholarship offers began to roll in. Every major football school, including Notre Dame, Oklahoma and Nebraska, made offers, but Leon opted for the University of Colorado. "They had a really strong program and they were one of the top five teams in the country. Plus I fell in love with the Rocky Mountains," he said.

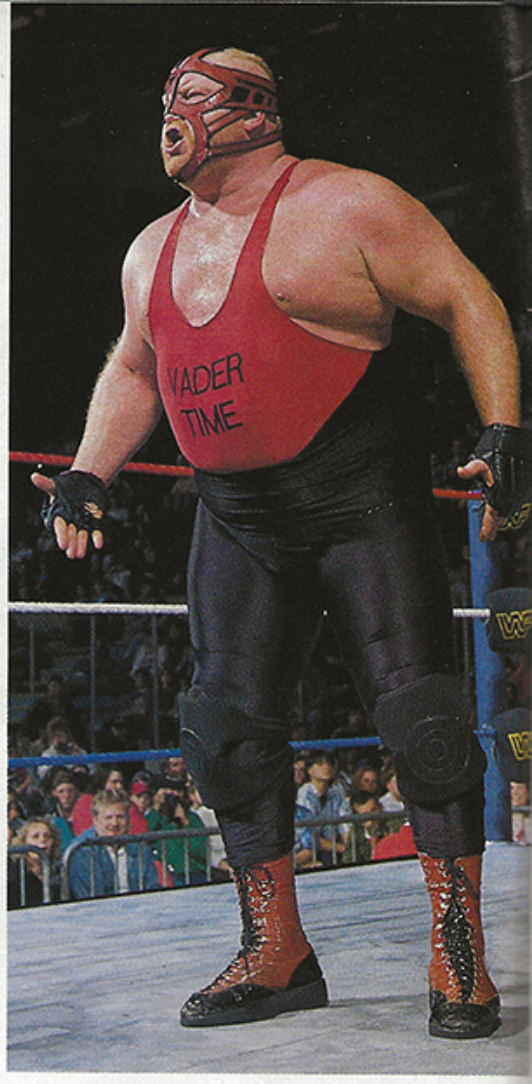
It was at the University of Colorado where White's trophy case began to fill up. A four-year starter, he was named to the All Big Eight Team twice—at all three down linemen positions in his senior year. That achievement alone should earn him a nomination to the Big Eight Hall of Fame and then, quite possibly, the College Football Hall of Fame. "That would be a tremendous honor," commented Vader on that prospect.

With a degree in business, White graduated from Colorado and was immediately drafted by the Los Angeles Rams to play football in the NFL. There he starred as an offensive tackle, but his football career was cut short when he suffered a knee injury against the Dallas Cowboys. While lead blocking on a sweep, White ruptured his patella tendon. After the injury healed, the big man tried to make a comeback, but he realized he just wasn't the same athlete. "I didn't have the 4.8 speed I once had. It just wasn't the same," he says. However, before walking away from the field, White had but one more accolade to experience... the chance to play in the Super Bowl. Since that time, Leon has endured eight more knee operations. "The doctors said I'd never walk right again and I proved them wrong."

Officially retired from the gridiron, White began contracting and developing homes in Boulder, Colorado. From there he also started his own business—a car wash called of all things "White Wash", while obtaining a real estate broker's license. However, as is the case with many prematurely "retired" athletes, the lure of professional sports and competition would still haunt White. Having the urge to compete still, he turned his sights to professional wrestling. He sold everything he had and entered the Verne Gagne School of Professional Wrestling, where he was trained by Olympic great and former AWA Tag Team Champion Brad Rheigans.

"At one time it was one of the best organizations in the business," recalls White. "I got there right at the tail end." In his rookie year Vader was surrounded by some very familiar names, Shawn Michaels and Marty Jannetty—then known as the Midnight Rockers—Curt Hennig, the Road Warriors and the Nasty Boys all called the AWA home. By the year's end, the man who was by then known as Leon "Baby Bull" White was named AWA Rookie of the Year. Even though the AWA was known for grooming some of the best in the business in those days, no one would ever have predicted at the time that Leon White would go on to achieve the success that he did over the next 10 years.

Soon after his start in the AWA,

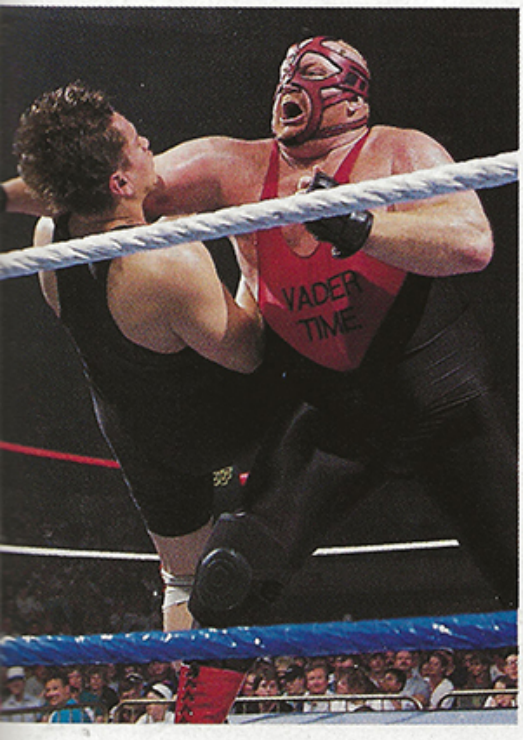


White began to gain international success. At about the same time he left the country, the "Baby Bull" had transformed into the Mastodon that they now call Vader. Sporting a much more aggressive, kick-ass ring style, and an "I don't give a sh!@#" attitude, Vader's vicious Japan years were just as busy as his tenure in the CWA. After he parted company with the IWGP, he moved on to the UWFI (United Wrestling Force International) and a more violent style of wrestling where the phrase "anything goes" meant EXACTLY THAT! Many critics claim that it was the UWFI that turned Vader into the ruthless, sadistic individual he is today. The international ring scene also allowed Vader to tangle with some of the greatest wrestlers in the sport, including Wanz, Tony St. Clair, The Great Muta, Antonio Inoki, Stan Hansen, Riki Choshu, Masa Chono and

Hobuko Takata, just to name a few. Vader's ability to manhandle such superstars earned him three major heavyweight titles at the same time in 1990—the CWA, the IWGP and the UWA (Universal Wrestling Alliance) out of Mexico.

"I was really busy that year, but it's something I'm really proud of," Vader says. "I really had to kick some tail to reach those accomplishments. The 'Baby Bull' could never have lived through those challenges. Vader was born out of necessity. A necessity to survive. Now others had to worry about survival once they stepped into the ring with me."

After a lengthy and successful run in all the aforementioned countries, it was time for Vader to head back to the states. He took the WCW by storm, utilizing his punishing style of reckless abandon to quash those who stood in his way. While in the WCW, Vader had some historic matches with Sting, as they fought a deadly fight for the WCW Title that eventually wound up around Vader's waist. From there he went on to hold that title two more times, while also capturing the United States Championship on one occasion. But the thing he was most challenged by were the matches he had with, ironically enough, his tag team partner here in the Federation—Davey Boy Smith. "I did have great matches with Sting, but me and Davey really tore some houses down," says Vader.



Vader finished his career with the WCW in July 1995, when he injured his shoulder during a match. While he was out of action his contract with WCW ran out, and Vader headed to the World Wrestling Federation. In his mind, he knew that after all he had accomplished, nothing would reach the pinnacle of "going to the show".

The first Vader vignette appeared on January 1, 1996, letting the world know that the Man they call Vader had officially arrived in the World Wrestling Federation, and that the clock now read "Vader Time". He made his first Federation live event appearance at the *Royal Rumble* where, with sore shoulder and all, he was still able to put on an awesome display of power. He was eventually tossed out by Shawn Michaels, as he brawled with then stable mate Yokozuna. "I never forgot that," said Vader. "Michaels was a marked man in my book from that day on."

After the rumble, Vader successfully underwent arthroscopic surgery on his shoulder to repair the damage it had sustained from years of taking a pounding. After rehabilitation, Vader began training heavily, dropping close to 60 pounds since his *Rumble* debut. "I have to be in the best shape of my career here," he comments. "Some of the greatest athletes in the world are here—believe me, I've been all over the world!"

In talking about his new stomping grounds, Vader says, "The World Wrestling Federation has focus and direction. It's run by a man who eats, drinks and sleeps wrestling. I feel like I've finally reached the pinnacle of my career." Even though he is overcome with confidence, Vader realizes that the journey through the World Wrestling Federation will not be a cake walk. "I have been in the ring with a lot of great wrestlers and I can say, without a doubt,

the best one has to be Shawn Michaels. Don't get me wrong, Jake and Yoko gave me all I could handle, but Shawn is like a machine. Then again... MACHINES BREAK! And when I get done with the Boy Toy, he will never work the same again!"

There is no doubt that Vader will be able to keep up with the rest of the talent in the Federation. One question remains: Will he be able to obtain the gold and achieve the dominance that he was able to in the past?

"There is no question! Every night when I step out of that ring, people are not going to forget the name Vader. I FEEL NO PAIN and I FEAR NO MAN! When that clock strikes Vader Time, Shawn Michaels and his Kliq are going to experience their destiny... their destruction! And then, once again, I will be sitting on top of the mountain!" ■

Still Fabulous!

Ray Rougeau Comes Out of Retirement– And Boxes Owen In

By Keith Elliot Greenberg

The Rougeau name is always uttered with a certain amount of reverence in Montreal, Quebec, Canada. For much of the 20th Century, the family has ruled both the boxing and wrestling rings in that city. Two generations ago, Armand Rougeau was an enormously popular pugilist. His sons, wrestlers Jacques Sr. and Johnny, held both the Tag Team Title and Singles Title in Canada. Jacques' son, Ray, made his grappling debut at the age of 16, tag teaming locally with his father and later establishing himself as a stellar competitor in the World Wrestling Federation.

In 1990, Ray retired from the ring, taking a job behind the microphone on both English- and French-language World Wrestling Federation broadcasts. As a journalist, he tried keeping his opinions to himself, although the task was often trying. Earlier this year, Owen Hart found a way to shatter the soft-spoken announcer's objectivity.

In January, Ray was interviewing the so-called "King of Harts" during the last card held at the historic Montreal Forum. It was an emotional night, with the largely French-speaking audience harking back to the arena's golden moments. But Hart—whose own father wrestled Jacques Rougeau Sr. in the 1950s—seemed unimpressed.

He diminished the contributions of French-Canadians to the sport of kings and mocked the Rougeau tradition at the Montreal Forum. As Ray turned away from the wrestler in disgust, Owen jumped the commentator, knocking him out.

The pressure was on Rougeau to come out of retirement and discipline Hart for his actions. But the reality was that Ray hadn't been active since 1989, and wasn't sure if he wanted to go into training to take on one of the World Wrestling Federation's premier competitors. Hart was unrelenting. Over the next several months, he continuously gloated about his attack on Rougeau, accusing him of "hiding behind his suit, tie and microphone" and pledging to "end your career that's already over".

From all over Canada, letters poured into the World Wrestling Federation. Wasn't there something officials could do to persuade Ray to step into the ring just one more time? As the demands increased, World Wrestling Federation president Gorilla Monsoon appealed to Rougeau directly. After much contemplation, Ray agreed to meet his enemy on the opening card at Montreal's brand new Molson Centre—but on the announcer's own terms.

Convinced that Ray's time away from the squared circle had made him rusty, Hart signed the contract without reading it—not understanding that he'd consented to a boxing match.

In the years since his retirement, Rougeau had kept in shape by boxing, a sport he learned from both his grandfather and father, who—prior to his grappling career—captured both the Golden Gloves and Canadian Amateur Championships. During Ray's early years in the ring, when older wrestlers were anxious to take advantage of the handsome teenager, the youngster frequently kept them in check with his fists. "I accomplished everything I ever wanted in wrestling," he now explained. "All my life, I dreamed of having a professional boxing match in my hometown. Owen Hart gave me my opportunity."

Feeling frantic, Hart and his manager Jim Cornette contacted George Chuvalo, a Quebec fighter who once went the distance with Muhammad Ali, and recruited him as trainer. But Rougeau countered with Deano Clavet, a former middleweight contender and currently a television star in Quebec. With Clavet guiding him, Ray trained two and a half hours daily for six days a week, dropping 26 pounds before the contest on August 2.

The Molson Centre was packed with fans waving the "Fleur de Lis"—the Quebec flag— at the Friday night event. Ray's father Jacques was in his corner, while other past stars of the Montreal wrestling scene—Gino Brito, Pat Patterson, Paul Leduc and Bob "Legs" Langevin—watched from the

wings. In the opening match, Paul Leduc's 20-year-old son Carl made his Montreal debut, sporting the same lumberjack outfit worn by his father and his uncle—rugged Jos Leduc—during their storied careers.

The Rougeau comeback had inspired Carl to reach for the stars. He devoted the entire weekend to building a relationship with the fans of Quebec, attending a special fundraiser for research into children's diseases in the Montreal suburb of Dorval on Sunday, sponsored by TV station CFCF-12. And in his Molson Centre match, young Leduc delighted the crowd by upsetting tough Justin "Hawk" Bradshaw with a cradle that seemed to have come from out of nowhere.

As Rougeau was told the results of that contest in his locker room, he contemplated the responsibility of being a second generation wrestler and dedicated the upcoming boxing match to his own son Felix. "He's six and a half years old," Ray reflected. "He was born five months after I retired. Since he learned to talk, he's wanted to see me in the ring. Tonight, I'll finally make him proud."

The arena was filled with chants of "Rougeau! Rougeau!" as Ray trooped to the ring, accompanied by his father and Clavet, where he revealed a pair of white trunks adorned with the Fleur de Lis. Judges gave the first round to the French-Canadian, who evaded a pair of jabs by his opponent and came back

with a left to the chin and combination with bodyshots. Exasperated by his adversary's proficiency at the sweet science, Hart waited until the round ended to sucker punch Rougeau.

Round Two saw the "King of Harts" box his opponent into the corner on two occasions. Both times, Ray punched his way out of trouble.

When Rougeau's left cross opened up a slight cut in Owen's mouth in the next round, Hart circumvented the rules, smashing his opponent in the back of the head. Ray quickly regained his composure, loosening Owen's mouthpiece and knocking him through the ropes with a succession of right crosses. Most likely, the match would have ended then and there. But before the referee could complete the count, Hart was saved by the bell.

Between rounds, as Owen and his manager were conceiving more underhanded tactics, trainer Chuvalo objected. As a man who had devoted his life to the sweet science, the heavyweight could never advocate such a strategy. Chuvalo was told to mind his business. Then, as he looked on furiously, Owen headbutted his opponent at the start of Round Four and—with the referee's attention elsewhere—zapped Rougeau with a spinning kick to the back of the head.

The official turned around in time to see Rougeau on the mat, struggling to his feet, only to be battered by Owen in the corner again. Ray mounted a slight offense, but Hart clearly had the lead. Round Four ended with Rougeau falling against the ropes, grateful

to still be in the match.

Ray's corner was furious. They screamed at the referee between rounds, urging him to keep his eye on the action. When the bell rang for Round Five, the argument was still raging. Noticing that the official's concentration remained diverted, Owen hurled his opponent out of the ring. Remarkably, Ray made it back between the ropes. But he was soon victimized by a right cross and flurry of fists in the corner.

The bell clanged, ending the round. Through his haze, Rougeau gazed at the distinguished features of his father, the innocent countenance of his son and the concerned looks of the hometown crowd. Rejuvenated, he bounded out of the corner for Round Six, bringing Owen down to one knee with a combination of lefts and rights to the face and body. Hart floundered to his feet, but Ray flew at him again, side-stepping a wild haymaker, then delivering an authoritative right cross.

Owen fell and with every ounce of energy, he labored to regain his footing. But his rubbery legs gave out from under him and he could do nothing but listen as the referee counted to ten.

The Molson Centre burst into celebration. For unknown reasons, Owen decided to focus his anger on Chuvalo, who—fed up with his student's juvenile stunts—ended the argument by KOing the "King of Harts" for a second time with a left hook.

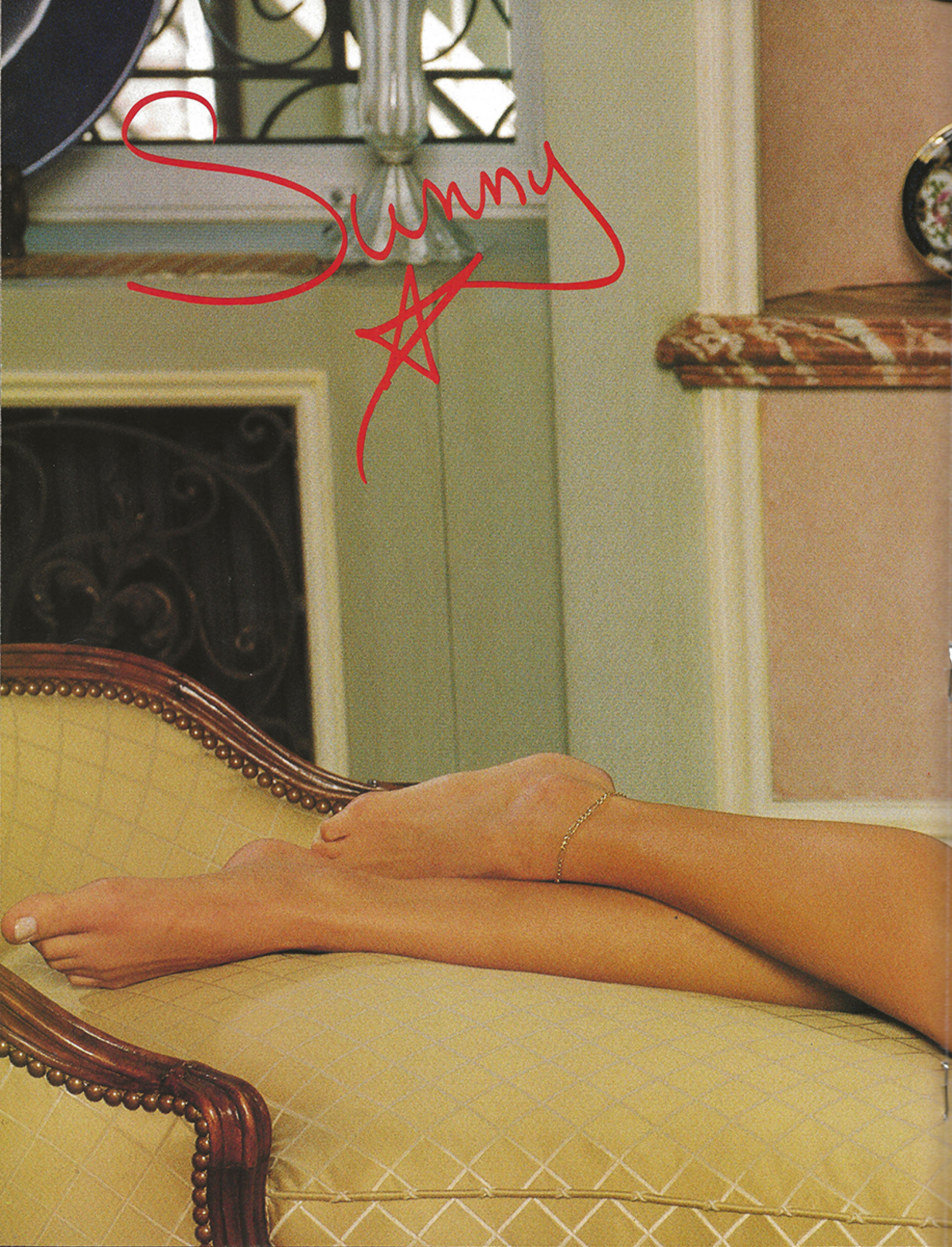
Basking in the adulation, Ray hoisted up his son Felix, who beamed at the crowd. From the rafters all the way down to ringside, the victor's fellow Quebecers shouted their approval, exalting in the triumph and the glory of their province and the enduring grandeur of the Rougeau family. ■

Sunny's Secrets

Photography by Randy O'Rourke

"I'm really not as complex as men figure me to be. My wants and needs are not that different from your average woman's. Of course, I don't fantasize about WHAT I want, I go out and I BUY it! For instance, I don't dream about driving down the highway in my metallic pink 1996 Porsche 958 Cabriolet... I DO IT!!! Remember—What Sunny wants—SUNNY GETS!!!"

"I can't fantasize about rolling around naked in piles of money, because that's a reality that takes place at least once a week!"


Sunny

"Sure, I can sit here and tell you that I fantasize about being surrounded by a harem of bodybuilders who eagerly anticipate my every command, but I'd be lying. I've BEEN THERE, DONE THAT so many times that I'm BORED with it!"

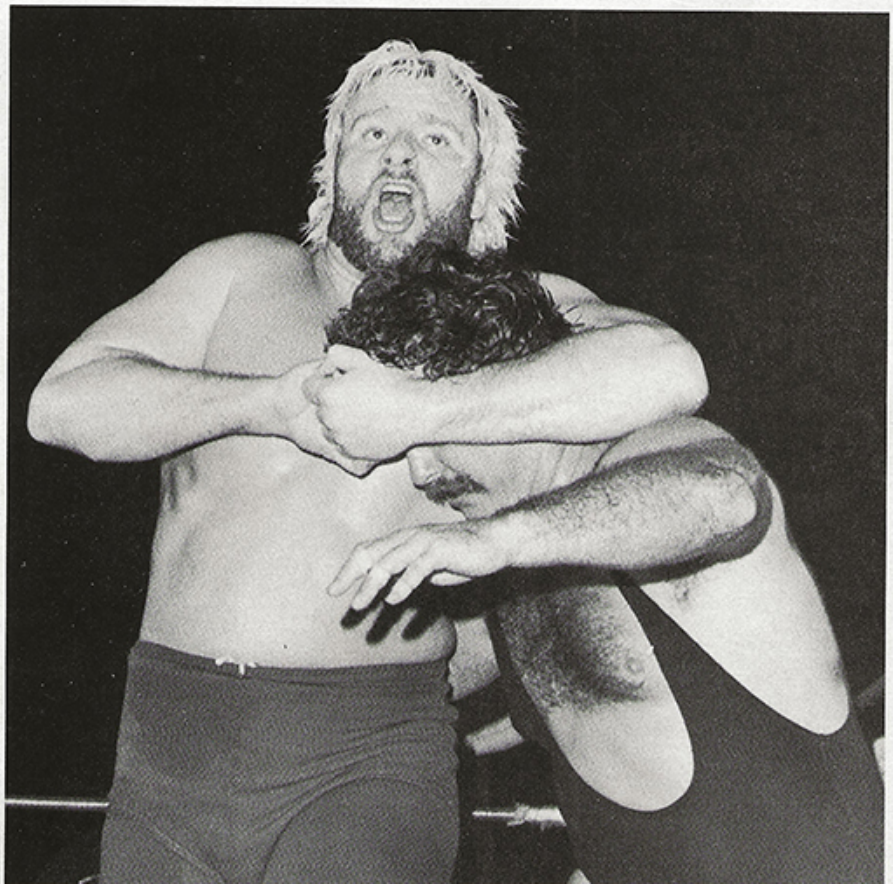
"What do I want for Christmas? I guess whatever I don't already have... which means—NOTHING!!!"

"If I did have one fantasy, I guess it would be this—to one day meet Mr. Right over my computer, while surfing the Internet. YEAH, RIGHT, YOU BUNCH OF COMPUTER-FREAK LOSERS!!! KEEP DREAMING! Who knows—maybe one day YOU WILL HAVE A LIFE!!!"

Yo, Whatever Happened To... The Valiant Brothers?

By Keith Elliot Greenberg

They were flashy and conceited, exciting and tough. Jimmy and Johnny Valiant didn't so much enter a room as barge into it. With their spangly outfits, blazing blond curls and non-stop banter, the Valiants were larger-than-life figures. One encounter was all a person needed to remember the Valiants forever. Fans at home claimed they could still hear their voices ringing in their ears during commercial breaks. And to this day, opponents will display dislocated joints and other maladies that came compliments of the Valiants.

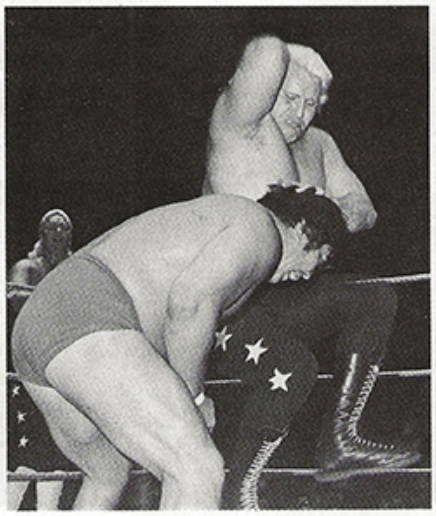


In many ways, the Valiants personified the era in which they thrived—the 1970s. It was a time of ridiculous gaudiness; people went to nightclubs with wildly frizzed hair, wide bell-bottoms and platform shoes. Likewise, the Valiants never left the locker room without their garish ring robes and tights bedecked with stars and words describing their attributes. In the

"me" decade, Jimmy and Johnny were leaders, boasting that their sole motive in the sport of kings was enhancing their own stature. While fans put on showy gold chains, rings and necklaces to socialize, the Valiants displayed their own special jewelry—the World Wrestling Federation Tag Team Championship belts.

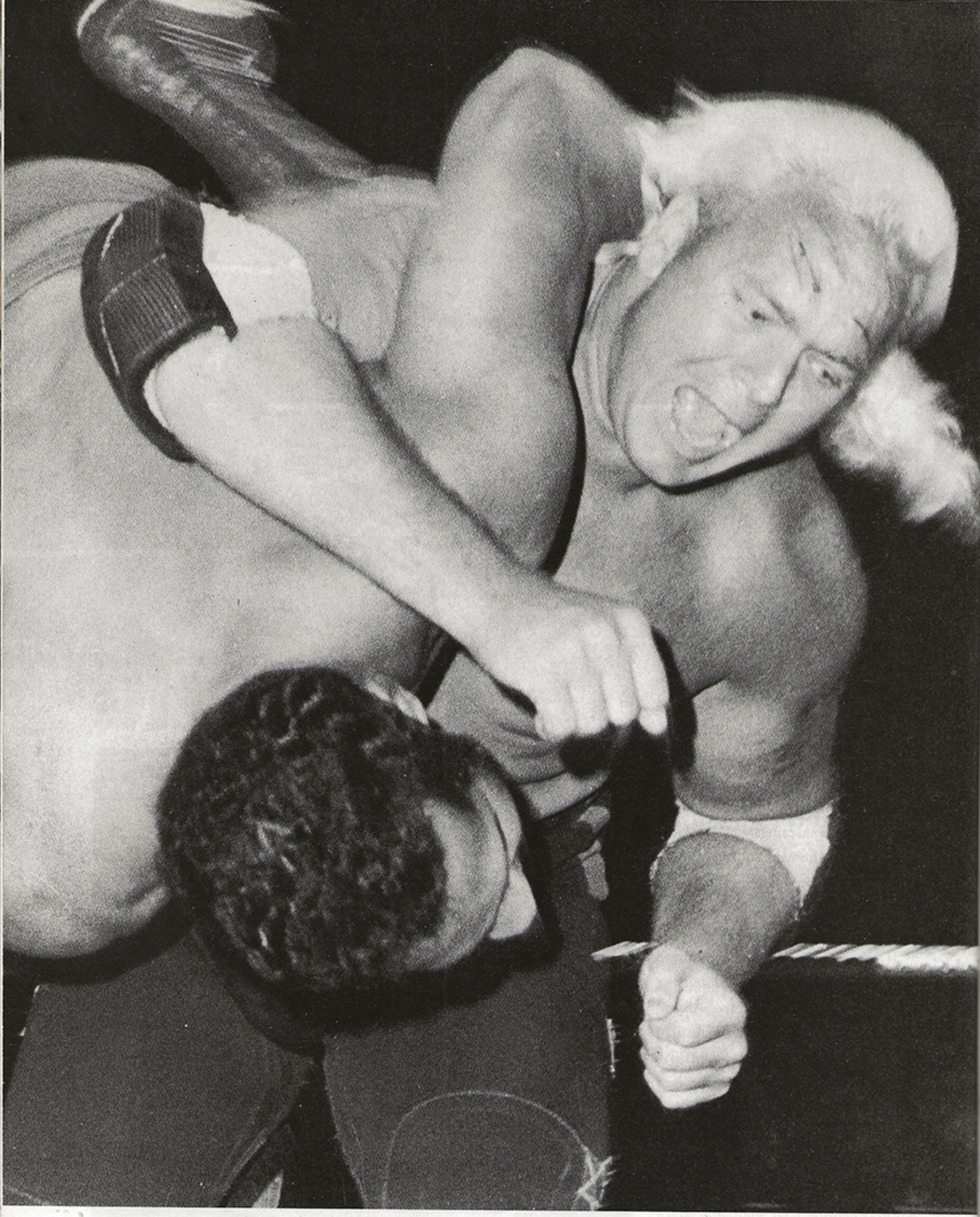
It was Captain Lou Albano, a squared circle sage, who piloted the Valiant Brothers' rise to fame. Albano had already managed World Wrestling Federation Champion Ivan Koloff. As a tag team advisor, he had supervised the careers of such tag team titlists as Tarzan Tyler and Crazy Luke Graham, and Baron Scicluna and King Curtis, but with the Valiants, he truly hit his stride.

Albano's personality completely blended with those of his proteges. Like Jimmy and Johnny, he was flamboyant and outrageous. While other managers might have tried to reign in the Valiants' more extreme behavior, Albano was cut from the same cloth and encouraged them to go all out. In Albano, the Valiants found a man who truly understood them, accepted their flaws along with their virtues and inspired them to take their boisterous arsenal one step further. Since he'd also had a long career in the ring, he brought along a first-hand knowledge of the tactics necessary to survive—and succeed—in the danger zone.



Jimmy Valiant was actually the first of the brothers to appear in the World Wrestling Federation. Initially, the strapping competitor with the flowing locks was a matinee idol, an early '70s version of Shawn Michaels. But Jimmy was growing frustrated with the direction of his career and, during a televised match, turned on his tag team partner, Chief Jay Strongbow.

Photo Credit: Pro Wrestling Illustrated/Bill Apter



NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 1996

At that moment, Jimmy's close relationship with the World Wrestling Federation's fans fell apart. At first, he seemed indifferent to the jeers and in time even appeared to grow stronger in the face of hostility.

By the time Johnny joined him in the World Wrestling Federation, the former heart-throb had taken to calling himself "Handsome Jimmy". His younger sibling then christened himself "Luscious Johnny". Along with his ring expertise, Johnny possessed a colorful vocabulary, and—together with Albano—baffled opponents with words almost as much as deeds.

The Valiants' opponents were the best tag teams in the world at the time. Tony Garea and Dean Ho were a dazzling combination, well-schooled in technical wrestling, but taken to spectacular aerial maneuvers. Ivan Putski and Tito Santana, on the other hand, were men with entirely different styles. Putski—a future World Wrestling Federation Hall of Famer—was a powerhouse, whose strength was complemented by the speediness of the weightless Santana.

But the Valiants were brothers—they thought alike and responded to attacks simultaneously. There was also the presence of Albano—a man not above interfering in a tough bout—and the psychological assault he advocated. More often than not, the Valiants' foes went home frustrated.

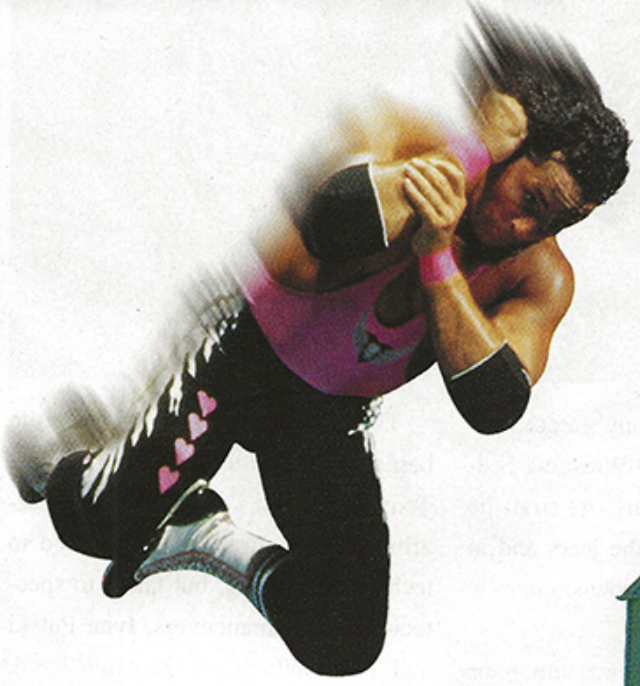
By the mid-1980s, the brothers had gone their separate ways. "Handsome Jimmy" grew a long beard, added a collection of tattoos to the original eagle illustrated on his bicep and began wrestling in the southern and mid-Atlantic states where, interestingly, the fans began applauding him again. Meanwhile, Johnny remained in the shadows of the squared circle, watching new talent and analyzing the ebbs and flows of the mat game.

When he next went public, Luscious Johnny was a manager, handling the career of Brutus Beefcake. At the first *WrestleMania*, the younger Valiant came out of retirement, joining his protege in a match-up against Bruno and David Sammartino. Over time, many new fans would forget the manager's past as a champion, and know him only by the nickname, Johnny V—an advisor with the wit and eloquence of his mentor, Lou Albano.

Whatever the Valiants tried, they did well, with a flair that no one could mimic. Today, the same holds true. Although he's slowed down a few paces since his days as a tag team titlist, Jimmy is still an active competitor, wrestling in smaller shows in the southern United States. And Johnny continues to besiege his audience from the other end of a microphone—as a stand-up comedian in the New York area. ■

THERE GOES THE

SHAWN MICHAELS IS BREAKING MORE THAN HEARTS, BABY!



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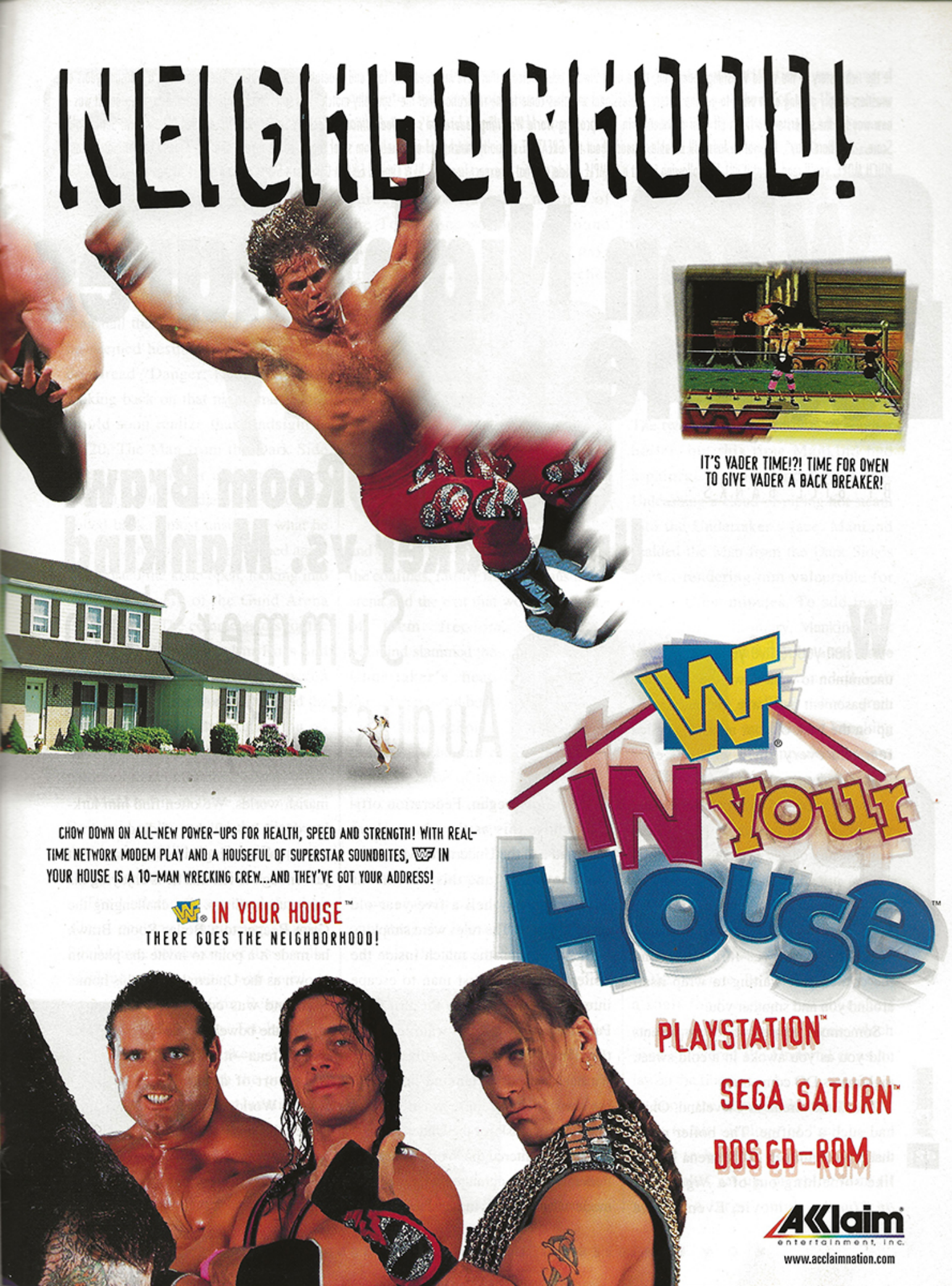
NEIGHBORHOOD!



In the rich history of the World Wrestling Federation, there have always been matches that have intrigued both fans and Federation officials alike. After more than a thousand years of wrestlers simply pinning each other to get the victory, professional wrestlers came to the realization that the "specialty match" was what the fans really wanted to see—and it was a new way for the superstars to finish off their opponents! In the upcoming ***World Wrestling Federation's Limited Edition Collector's Series, Vol. III***, entitled "Showdown: Settling the Score... The Hard Way", Federation fans will be able to read about the GREATEST specialty matches of all time! From steel cages, battle royals, and hog pens to casket matches and MUCH MORE, you'll read about it all! The following is just a SAMPLE article of what to expect from this NEW Limited Edition Collector's Series on sale at newsstands everywhere!

When Nightmares Become Reality

BY BILL BANKS

The Boiler Room Brawl
Undertaker vs. Mankind
SummerSlam
August 18, 1996

When you're five years old, it's not uncommon to walk down the stairs into the basement and have the hairs stand up on the back of your neck. It's called fear and every child who has ever watched a horror movie has felt it—fear of the dark, fear of the shadows around you, fear of the unknown. Parts of the basement seem to move... sounds you're not making echo throughout. If you stayed down there too long, you soon developed a sense of urgency, as if something was lurking around the corner, just waiting to wrap itself around you and smother you.

Sometimes, despite what your parents told you as you awoke in a cold sweat, nightmares DO come true.

The Gund Arena in Cleveland, Ohio, had such a confine. The boiler room that powered much of the arena looked like something out of a *Nightmare on Elm Street* movie. Even before *SummerSlam* began, Federation officials chose this as the place where Mankind and the Undertaker would settle their score... and this cavern was worse than any hell a five-year-old could imagine. The rules were simple—both men began the match inside the boiler room. The first man to escape into the arena and grab the urn from Paul Bearer—who was waiting inside the ring—would be declared the winner. But with Mankind lurking in the dark, getting there wasn't going to be an easy task for the Undertaker.

Since he entered the World Wrestling Federation, the deranged Mankind has made a habit of living in these nightmarish worlds. We often find him lurking down long flights of dingy stairs... never quite seeing his entire face, but just enough to tell that he is enjoying his grim surroundings. By challenging the Grim Reaper to a Boiler Room Brawl, he made it a point to invite the phenom known as the Undertaker into his home. Mankind was comfortable in the bowels of the Gund Arena—it was like some sort of demonic Disney World to the lunatic. He sat... waiting for the Grim Reaper... waiting for the painful night to begin.

As the Undertaker walked down the long hall that led into the boiler room, he seemed hesitant. The sign on the door read "Danger: Keep Out", and looking back on that night, many fans would soon realize that hindsight is 20/20. The Man from the Dark Side puzzled over it for a moment, then reached for the handle of the door. He pulled back, almost unsure of what he was about to do... then he reached again and twisted the knob open, looking into the black cavern of the Gund Arena Boiler Room. The commentators for the evening, Mr. Perfect, Jim Ross and Vince McMahon, could only watch with the rest of the world. They had the privilege of calling the match... but remained silent, somehow awed by the nature of the contest.

"Mankind is in there somewhere," Ross said as he cracked the silence of the airways. "Will the Grim Reaper be able to find him in time?"

The Undertaker searched the dark alleys, peaking around every corner. Somewhere, behind one of those walls, Mankind stood... waiting with bated breath for the Grim Reaper to walk his way. Too bad for the Undertaker... he failed to search the one place where the lunatic was. As he walked down the hallway, Mankind cracked a lead pipe over his opponent's head from behind, sending the phenom to the concrete floor and marking the beginning of the battle back to the ring.

The Undertaker would not stay down long, however. Grabbing a garbage can lid, the master of the Tombstone wrapped it around Mankind's head, sending the psychopath into a frenzy of screeches

and hisses. The two battled deeper into the confines, farther from the fans in the arena and the exit that would grant one of them freedom. Mankind slammed the Undertaker's head into a large metal boiler, the thud echoing throughout the entire room. Because of the large concrete walls that kept these two monsters locked in, camera interference soon resulted. Snow erupted on the screen and the only thing the human eye could make out was the dim light overhead in the boiler room as the screen flickered. The live audience booed their disapproval inside the arena, unable to see the action downstairs.

As soon as the actions re-emerged on the screen, visions of the Undertaker and Mankind battling with garbage cans and metal pipes soon filled the arena.

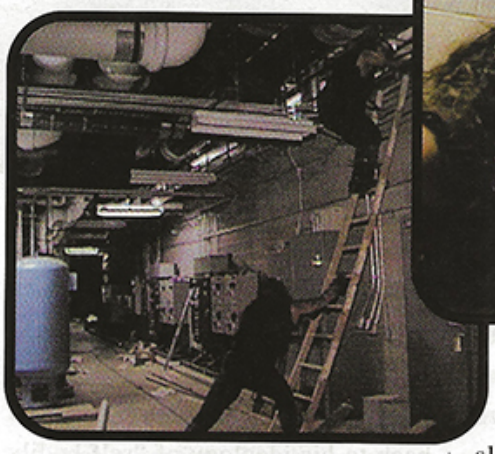
The two men collapsed next to another boiler, but this time Mankind had a painful plan in mind for his foe. Unleashing a cloud of piping hot steam into the Undertaker's face, Mankind scalded the Man from the Dark Side's eyes... rendering him vulnerable for the next few minutes. To add insult to injury, Mankind took a large plastic tube and jammed it into the Undertaker's groin area, almost knocking his opponent unconscious. As the Undertaker fell to the concrete, he tried to grab on to a shelf for leverage. But that shelf contained about 30 large pipes, which soon showered the Undertaker as he lay on the floor.

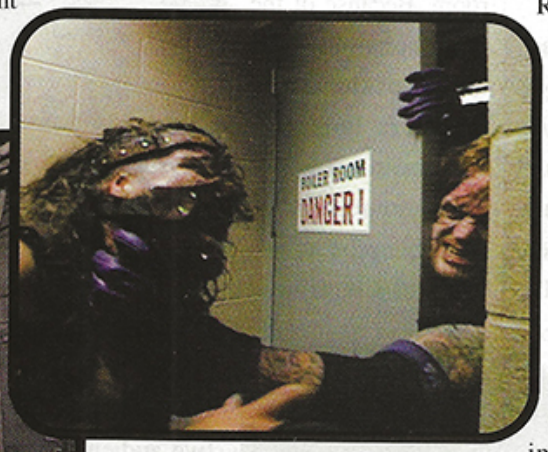
Soon, the deranged lunatic reverted back to his ideology of "self bodily harm" to hurt his opponent. As the Undertaker sat up, propping himself against a large metal cargo door,

Mankind flew threw the air, crashing not only himself but also the Undertaker's head into the metal. Then, like some kind of twisted circus performer, Mankind climbed a metal railing and dove off with an elbow to the Grim Reaper's head. The screeches and howls of Mankind revealed his physical pain, but it was nothing compared to the damage he had just inflicted on the Undertaker.

Once again, because of the nature of the boiler room, the screen went fuzzy for more than a minute. Before the interruption, it seemed as though the audience had become part of the match, almost first-person, and now they were booing once more. The picture came back on for a brief second, then went off again. Finally, a distressing image filled the screen as soon as the camera came back into range. Mankind was standing over the Grim Reaper with a 10-foot ladder! Propping the ladder against the wall, Mankind climbed to the very top—10 feet—to deliver another elbowdrop. Unfortunately, the Undertaker rose up off the concrete, grabbing for the madman on his ladder. The audience erupted in applause as he launched Mankind off... straight down 10 feet to the cold concrete. This was the chance the Undertaker needed to get to the door and escape into the arena.

Hobbling to the exit—with more than 20 minutes of torture aching his body—the Undertaker found the metal steps that led to the exit. Mankind met him there and delivered a steel chain to his opponent's knees, knocking him to the floor. The Undertaker grabbed the nearest weapon, a fire extinguisher, and blew the nitrous contents into the madman's face. The Grim Reaper would be the first man to step through the exit, but he was quickly dragged back into the boiler room by the claws of his opponent. Mankind, like something out of a Stephen King novel, began to gruesomely slam the large metal door on the Undertaker's head—crack after crack after crack sent the Undertaker's eyes rolling to the back of his head. Mankind was free, and he was going to make sure that the Undertaker never made it out of there alive.





The master of the Mandible Claw was out into the locker room hallway—directly behind the arena. The Undertaker tried to get out also, but soon found that Mankind had stacked the contents of the hallway against the door, keeping his opponent locked inside. As Mankind crawled down the hall, the Undertaker burst through the door, sending the contents flying across the room. He stalked Mankind, who now appeared terrified at the man coming for him. Forgetting that they were still actually hooked into the telecast, the three announcers, most notably Jim Ross, broke the silence when he saw this sight.

"I can't believe what I'm seeing," said the commentator. "It looks like a prison riot has erupted in the back. I can't believe either of these men is still standing!"

On both sides of the locker room, nearly every Federation superstar involved that night was watching the confrontation, but no one dared get in the way of the two individuals. Breaking away from the Undertaker, Mankind hurried down the hall, finding solace between the two large coffee machines that supplied beverages to the wrestlers. Unfortunately for the Undertaker, Mankind soon found another use

for this hot coffee. As the Grim Reaper rounded the corner, Mankind doused his opponent with the scalding liquid... burning the Undertaker's skin from head to foot. The Undertaker had felt the steam from the pipe in the boiler room, and now this! Lying on the floor, Undertaker could do nothing but watch Mankind make his way out to the entrance of the arena.

As the lunatic looked at the crowd, he sensed that the end was near. Barely 60 yards away, the urn and Paul Bearer waited. If Mankind could make it to that ring, he would be victorious. However, Undertaker had regained his composure and he met Mankind in the walkway. The two battled down the floor—fans frenzied over the possibility that the Undertaker was becoming stronger. With every step the Man from the Dark Side took toward Paul Bearer and the urn his punches seemed to gain more power... almost as though the Undertaker was drawing strength from the urn and his manager. The Grim Reaper sent his opponent head-first into one of the many television monitors set along ringside for the fans. Mankind was now on the ground, and the Undertaker's moment of truth was now at hand.

As he jumped to the apron, the Undertaker was poised to walk through the ropes and grab the victory. But, as Jason often does in every *Friday the 13th* sequel, Mankind shook off his pain and joined the Undertaker on the ropes. Could Mankind pull off the win and get into the ring first to grab the urn? As the world watched, the two monsters fought. Paul Bearer began to pace up and down the ring. At first, many believed this was the worry that he would soon possibly come face-to-face with Mankind. Soon, that opinion changed... just as the history of the World Wrestling Federation would.

The two men battled viciously on the apron, but it was clear the Undertaker was just too powerful. The Grim Reaper sent Mankind flying into the ringside barricade after using the ring ropes as a slingshot—leaving the path clear to enter the ring and receive the urn from his longtime manager. Nothing could stop him now... not Mankind, not the pain, not any boiler room, nothing. Until, that is, our worst nightmares come true—the unexpected happens.

As the Undertaker held up his hand to Bearer, the manager turned his back on his longtime friend! For over six years, Paul Bearer had been by the Undertaker's side... and now he was the only thing stopping the Undertaker from destroying Mankind. Never did the Grim Reaper, the audience, the millions of fans watching on Pay-Per-View or the announcers suspect that this could happen.

In one brief moment, Paul Bearer shocked the world and ended his relationship with the Undertaker when he crashed the urn down on the Man from the Dark Side's cranium. The Undertaker crawled to Bearer like a baby would to its mother, asking "Why, Paul, why?" But he was denied an answer when Mankind rushed into the ring and applied the Mandible Claw.

Laughing, Bearer handed the urn to Mankind for the win! The audience was shocked... disbelief gave way to silence for what seemed like an eternity. Both the former manager and the lunatic took turns pummeling the Undertaker until he was lifeless in the middle of the ring. Mankind and Bearer embraced... leaving the ring with the victory and letting the Undertaker lie motionless.

"This is sickening," Vince McMahon said to the audience watching at home. "Paul Bearer is leaving behind six years of a legacy... a bond... a friendship that seemed inseparable!"

As the lights went pitch black in the next few minutes, the fans at the Gund Arena didn't know what to think. The Undertaker's lifeless carcass was soon plucked from the ring by seven druids... eerie church music filling the arena. After all the pain and torture the Man from the Dark Side had faced in the boiler room that night and months before in his war with Mankind, a longtime friend destroyed his chances of a victory.

Paul Bearer had turned his back on the Undertaker in his time of need... a time when the Grim Reaper seemed most vulnerable. That night at *SummerSlam*, Mankind wasn't the only monster lurking in the corner and waiting to smother the Undertaker—Paul Bearer also was! The Grim Reaper faced his fears in the dark that night, and it was worse than any nightmare he could ever wake from! ■

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THE TOP TEN GREATEST WORLD WRESTLING FEDERATION

MANAGERS OF ALL TIME?

What's the difference between a wrestler with a promising career and a grappler with a brilliant one? Often, the answer is a manager—an individual responsible for sizing up a protege, enhancing his strengths, diminishing his weaknesses and tracking him onto a path leading to greatness.

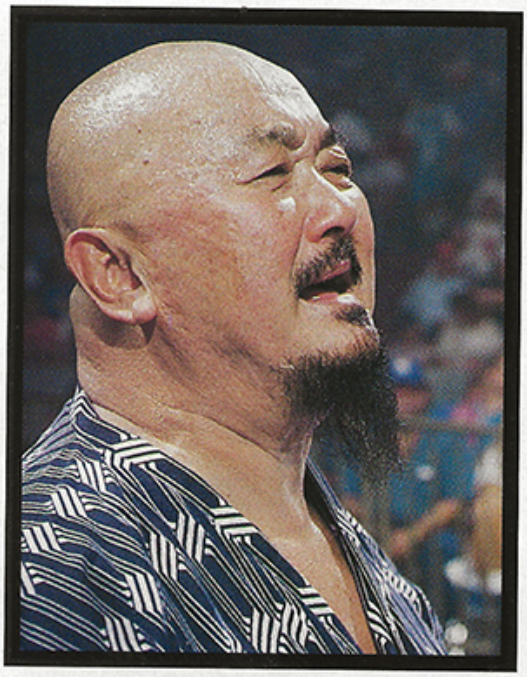
Old-timers still speak expansively about Bobby Davis, a youthful advisor who handled the careers of "Nature Boy" Budd Rogers and Gorilla Monsoon in the early 1960s. Rogers and Monsoon were eventually inducted into the World Wrestling Federation Hall of Fame. Few today realize that the Undertaker would not be in the World Wrestling Federation had Brother Love not originally introduced him to the mat wars. And before Rowdy Roddy Piper became a mythic figure, he entered the World Wrestling Federation as the manager of Paul "Mr. Wonderful" Orndorff.

But the following list isn't devoted to sidenotes and trivia. This is a collection of the best World Wrestling Federation managers of all time—men and women able to reach into the souls of the world's most tempestuous gladiators and transform them into superstars.

By Keith Elliot Greenberg

#10. TIE: MISS ELIZABETH/MR. FUJI

For much of Randy "Macho Man" Savage's career, he gained both strength and direction from the alluring Miss Elizabeth, the manager who would guide him to the World Wrestling Federation Heavyweight Championship twice and once to the wedding altar. Elizabeth's one weakness was her ineffectiveness in handling other talent. When she attempted to manage Hulk Hogan, he and Savage were soon locked in combat over the pretty advisor's affections.



Therefore, she comes in at number ten, tied with the inscrutable Mr. Fuji, whose proteges included such Tag Team Champions as Demolition and Yokozuna and Owen Hart. Although Mr. Fuji also appeared in Yokozuna's corner during his notable World Wrestling Federation Championship reign, Jim Cornette was brought in as co-manager, sharing in the one-time sumo star's glory.

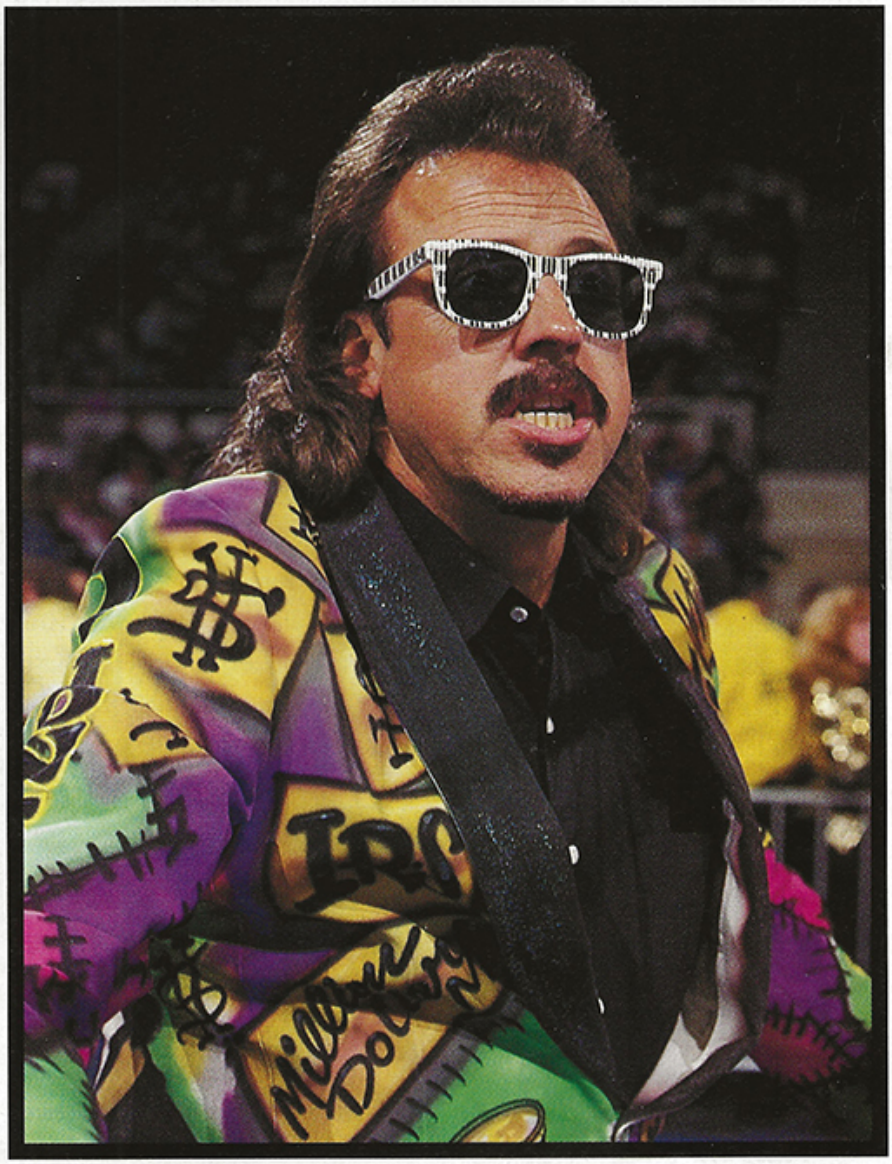
Elvis impersonator on top longer than any other title holder. While Hart was also Hulk Hogan's advisor during his final title reign, Hogan had built his name long before the Mouth of the South came along, and Hogan probably would have captured the gold whether he had a manager or not.

#8. BOBBY "THE BRAIN" HEENAN

A decade ago, Heenan may well have been the most influential man in the squared circle. Regardless of what was transpiring in the World Wrestling Federation, he seemed to be at the center of it. At the first *WrestleMania*, he supported the late Big John Studd in his battle to prove that he was the true Giant of the mat, not Andre. At *WrestleMania 2*, Heenan was King Kong Bundy's advisor when the number one contender laced into Hulk Hogan in the main event. In 1987, "The Brain" convinced Andre to turn on his fans and challenge Hogan for the championship. Even after Andre lost, Heenan kept rolling—illegally assisting Ravishing Rick Rude in his Intercontinental Title win over the Ultimate Warrior, navigating Andre and Haku to the tag straps and persuading future Federation Champion Ric Flair to reach for the stars in the World Wrestling Federation.

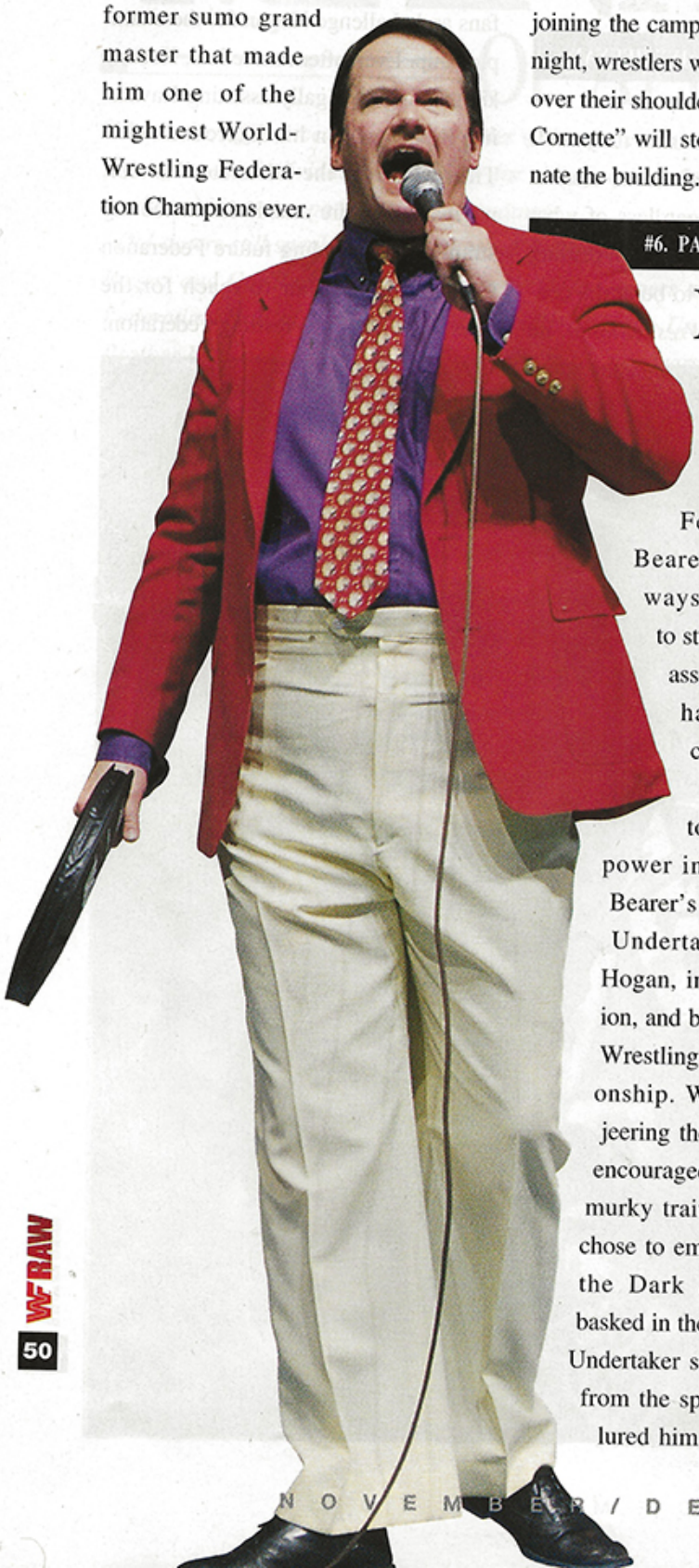
#9. JIMMY HART

"The Mouth of the South" had a reputation for being obnoxious—he'd frequently heckle rivals from ringside with a megaphone—and for his extraordinary success rate. When Bret "Hit Man" Hart was establishing himself as a talented wrestler generally excluded from main events, the "Mouth" had the good sense to pair him with Jim "The Anvil" Neidhart—creating a championship combo known as the Hart Foundation. Later, it was Hart's savvy that steered the Honky Tonk Man to the Intercontinental Belt and then kept the



#7. JIM CORNETTE

What Heenan was to the '80s, Cornette has been to the '90s—and more! While Mr. Fuji may have initially groomed Yokozuna for greatness, it was Cornette's honing of the massive former sumo grand master that made him one of the mightiest World-Wrestling Federation Champions ever. As Vader has rampaged through the World Wrestling Federation, Cornette has been at his side, stoking the fires of contention. When Owen Hart decided to wage war on his brother Bret, Cornette not only instigated the self-proclaimed "King of Harts", but talked another relative, the British Bulldog, into joining the camp. At every arena every night, wrestlers walk to the ring looking over their shoulders, fearing that "Camp Cornette" will storm the ring and detonate the building.



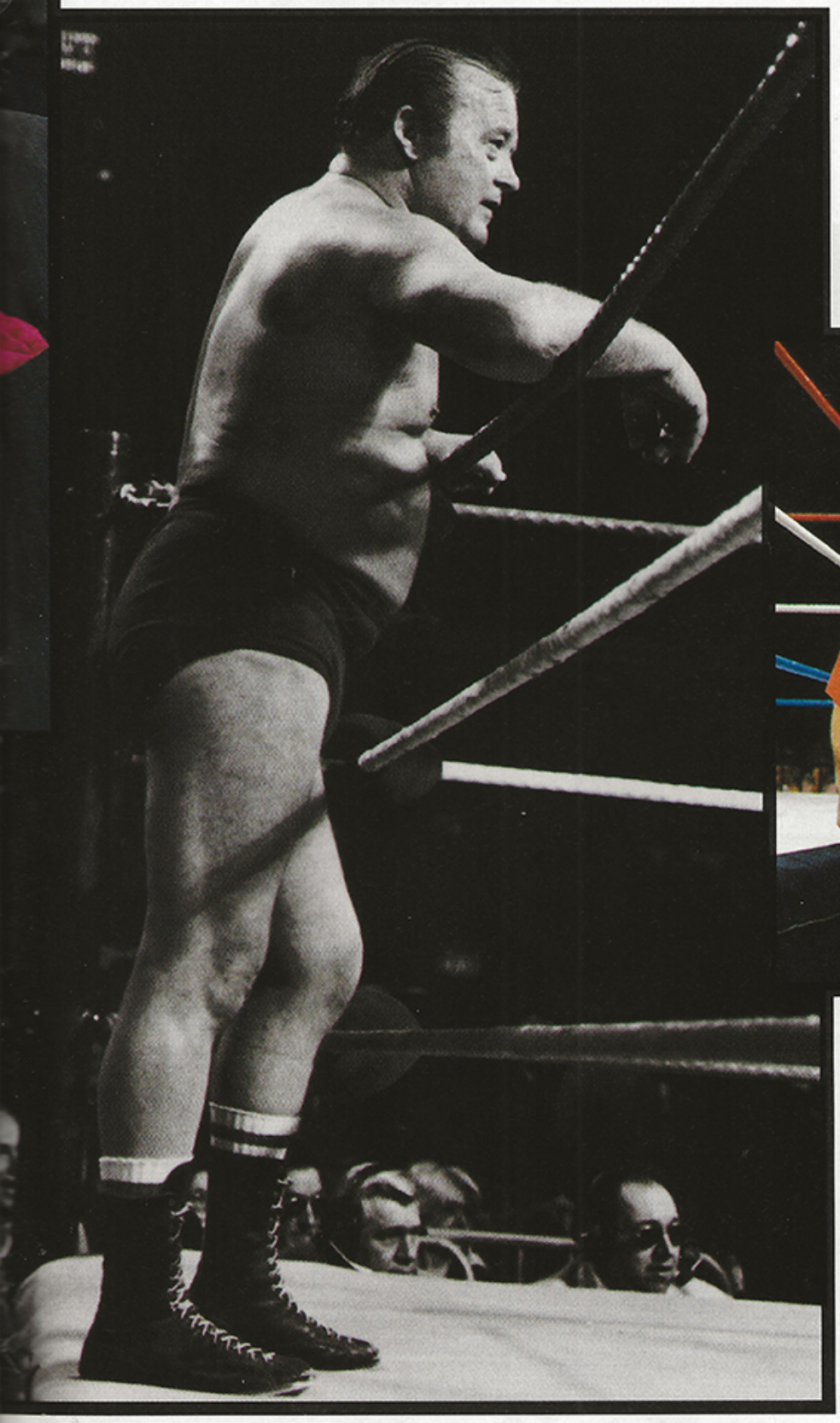
#6. PAUL BEARER

Now the talk of the World Wrestling Federation, Bearer has always managed to stupefy even his closest associates. For years, he had the Undertaker completely under his spell, holding the key to the Pale Warrior's power in a mysterious urn. Bearer's counsel enabled the Undertaker to topple Hulk Hogan, in controversial fashion, and briefly hold the World Wrestling Federation Championship. When the fans were jeering the Undertaker, Bearer encouraged his protege's most murky traits. When the public chose to embrace the Man from the Dark Side, Bearer also basked in the spotlight. When the Undertaker strangely disappeared from the sport of kings, Bearer lured him back to the land of the living. Now Bearer has abandoned his longtime charge, aligning himself instead with the bizarre Mankind, and inaugurating a new, macabre era in World Wrestling Federation history.

#5. ARNOLD SKAALAND

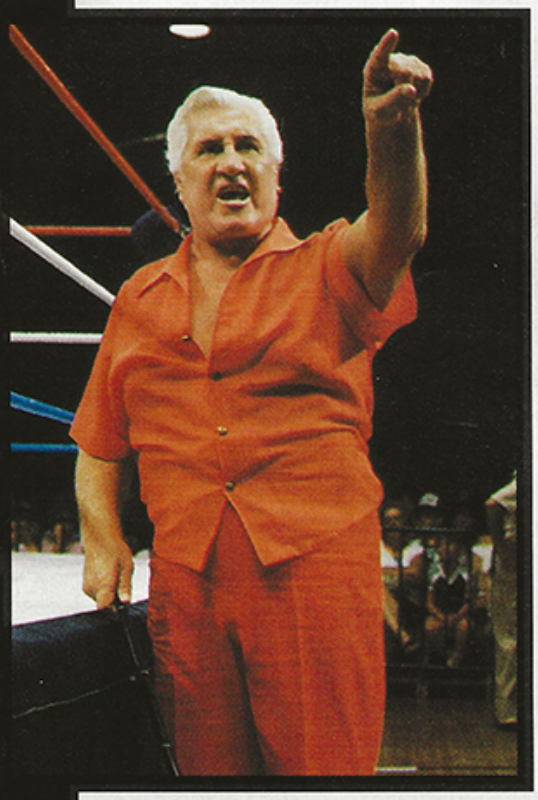
It's the quiet ones you have to watch out for! That's what folks said about Arnold Skaaland and usually they were right. Back when he was known as "the Golden Boy", Skaaland went to the ring with no gimmicks... just trunks and boots and the desire to conquer the opposition. Once he retired, he brought the same ethic to managing. Both Bruno Sammartino and Bob Backlund depended on Skaaland's ring acumen to keep

an edge during their respective title reigns. That means that, from the 1960s into the early 1980s, Skaaland was for the most part the brains behind the champion. On the surface, he remained quiet and unassuming. But behind the scenes, the "Golden Boy" may have held more power than any other man in the sport of kings.



#4. FREDDIE BLASSIE

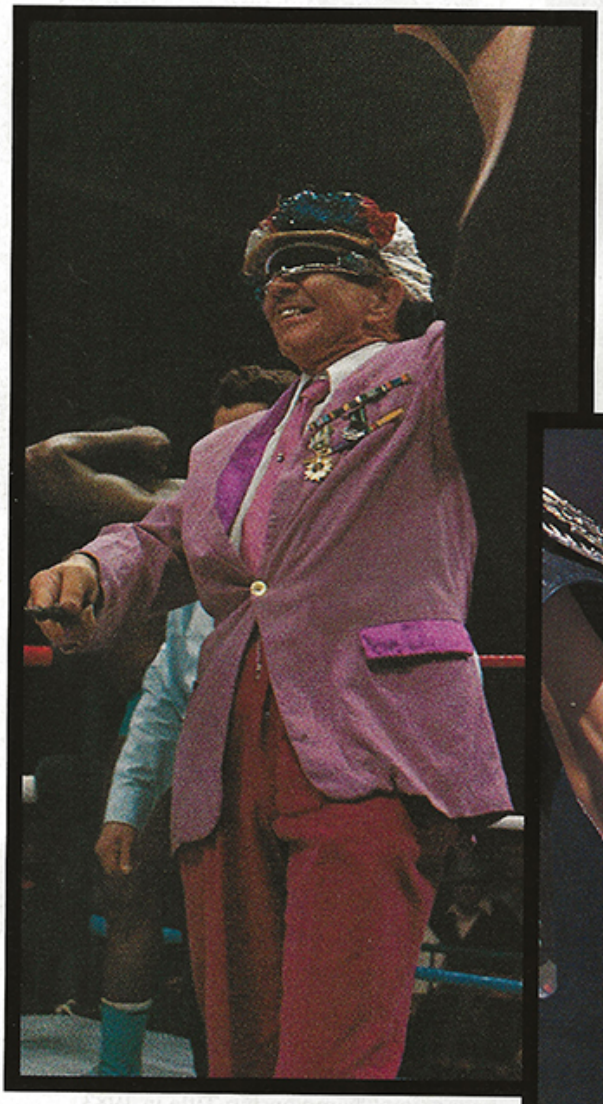
The "Hollywood Fashion Plate" was a true original—a wrestler who sharpened his teeth before matches, a personality courted by celebrities, a manager who instilled the wisdom of his years in the ring into his proteges and developed a generation of grappling dignitaries. When Japanese mat legend Antonio Inoki took on Muhammad Ali in a famous boxer vs. wrestler clash, the boxing hero called Blassie and recruited



him as a manager. It was Blassie's unrelenting philosophy that drove the "Iron Sheik", as he overwhelmed Bob Backlund to win the World Wrestling Federation Championship Title in 1983. To his proteges, Blassie was the ultimate coach, imparting a knowledge that can only be derived from battling the fires between the ropes. But to the fans, he will forever be known for the term he concocted to describe many of his adversaries—"pencil neck geek".

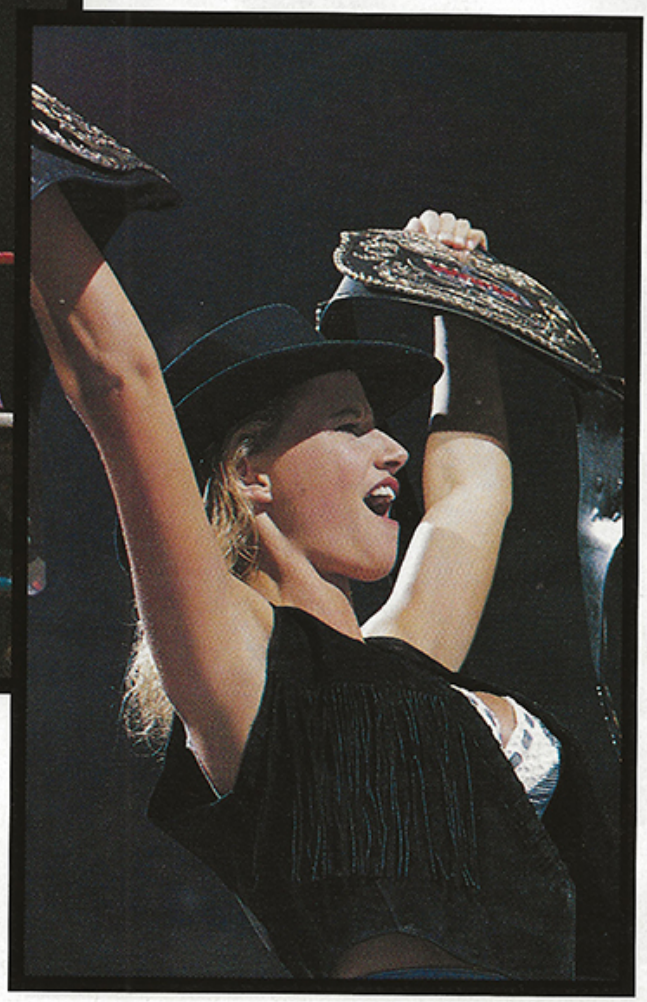
#3. THE GRAND WIZARD

Pedro Morales, Chief Jay Strongbow and Gorilla Monsoon all had the same experience. As the most popular wrestlers of their day, they constantly endured the taunts of the Grand Wizard of wrestling—a puny man with a mouth so big. The brawniest of combatants was forced to look away from his opponent and digest the stinging words. The "Grand Wizard" Ernie Roth had his finest moments when he led Stan Stasiak and later "Superstar Billy Graham" to World Wrestling Federation gold. Oddly enough, after his death the very men he had heckled grew nostalgic for his invective. And when the Wizard was inducted to the World Wrestling Federation Hall of Fame in 1995, his former enemies in the audience rose to their feet and wildly applauded.



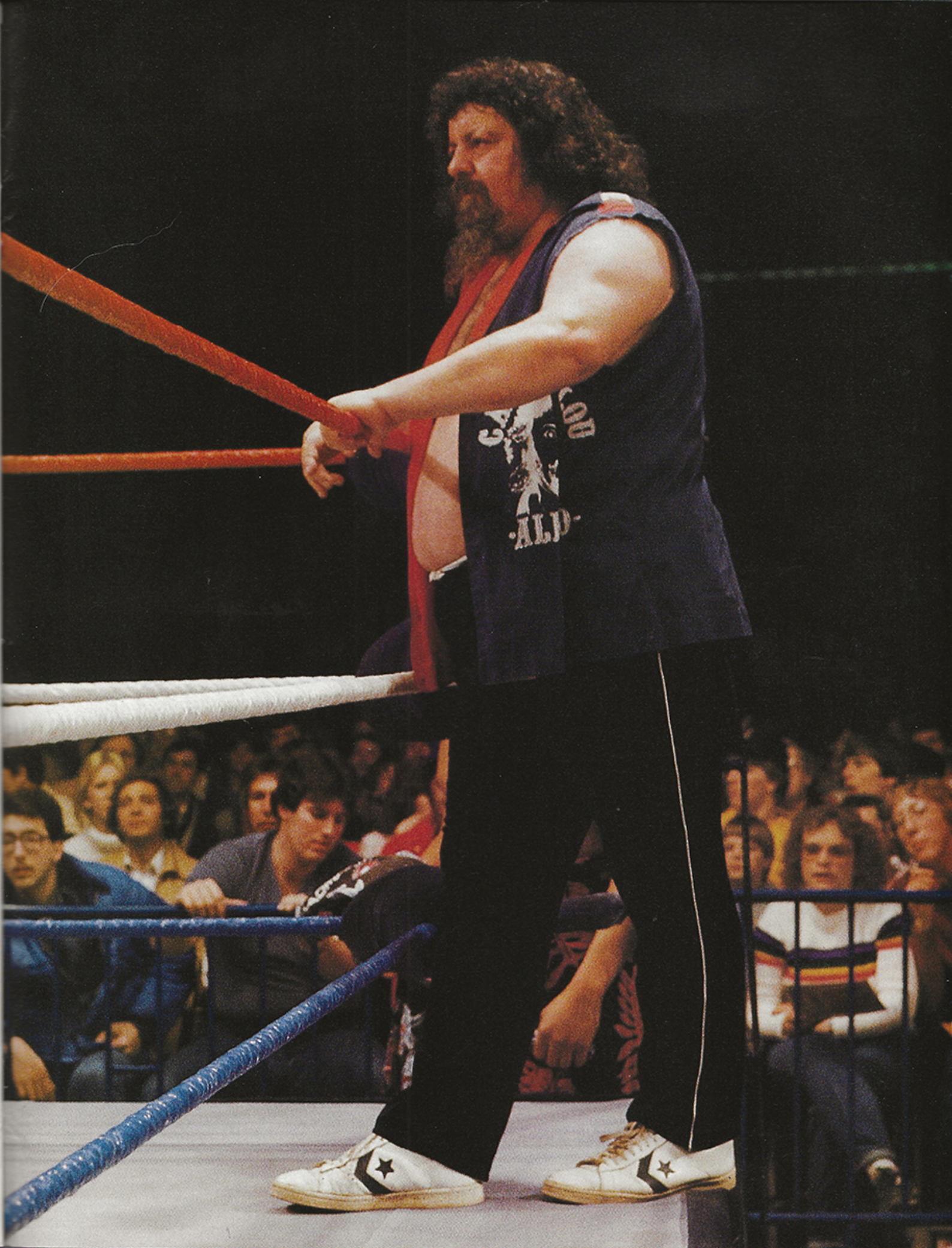
#2. SUNNY

She's hot, wicked and prospering by the day—a scheming temptress who happens to be one of the most important players in the World Wrestling Federation. The last three World Wrestling Federation Tag Team Champions—the Body Donnas, Godwinns and Smoking Gunns—have all been managed by Sunny during their reigns. No other manager—not Blassie nor the Wizard, Heenan or Cornette—has ever been able to reach this "three-in-a-row" record. And Sunny is a relative newcomer to the World Wrestling Federation. Imagine what she'll be like years from now when she hits her stride. The prospects are truly frightening!



#1. CAPTAIN LOU ALBANO

Numbers don't lie. When the triumphs of the World Wrestling Federation's horde of managers are calculated, the legendary "Captain" comes out ahead of everyone. No one ever managed more World Wrestling Federation Tag Team Champions—and it can be argued no manager ever will. When a protege took on Albano, more likely than not a championship was imminent. Ask Ivan Koloff, who—with Albano urging him on—ended Bruno Sammartino's long heavyweight reign in 1971. Greg "The Hammer" Valentine—who attained Intercontinental eminence with the Captain's advice—the Valiant Brothers, Wild Samoans, British Bulldogs and numerous other duos have all been led to the tag team straps by the Hall of Famer. When most men brag they invite scorn on themselves. But when Albano proclaimed that he was frequently imitated but never duplicated, everyone agreed that he spoke the truth. ■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THE NIGHT THE BELT CHANGED HANDS

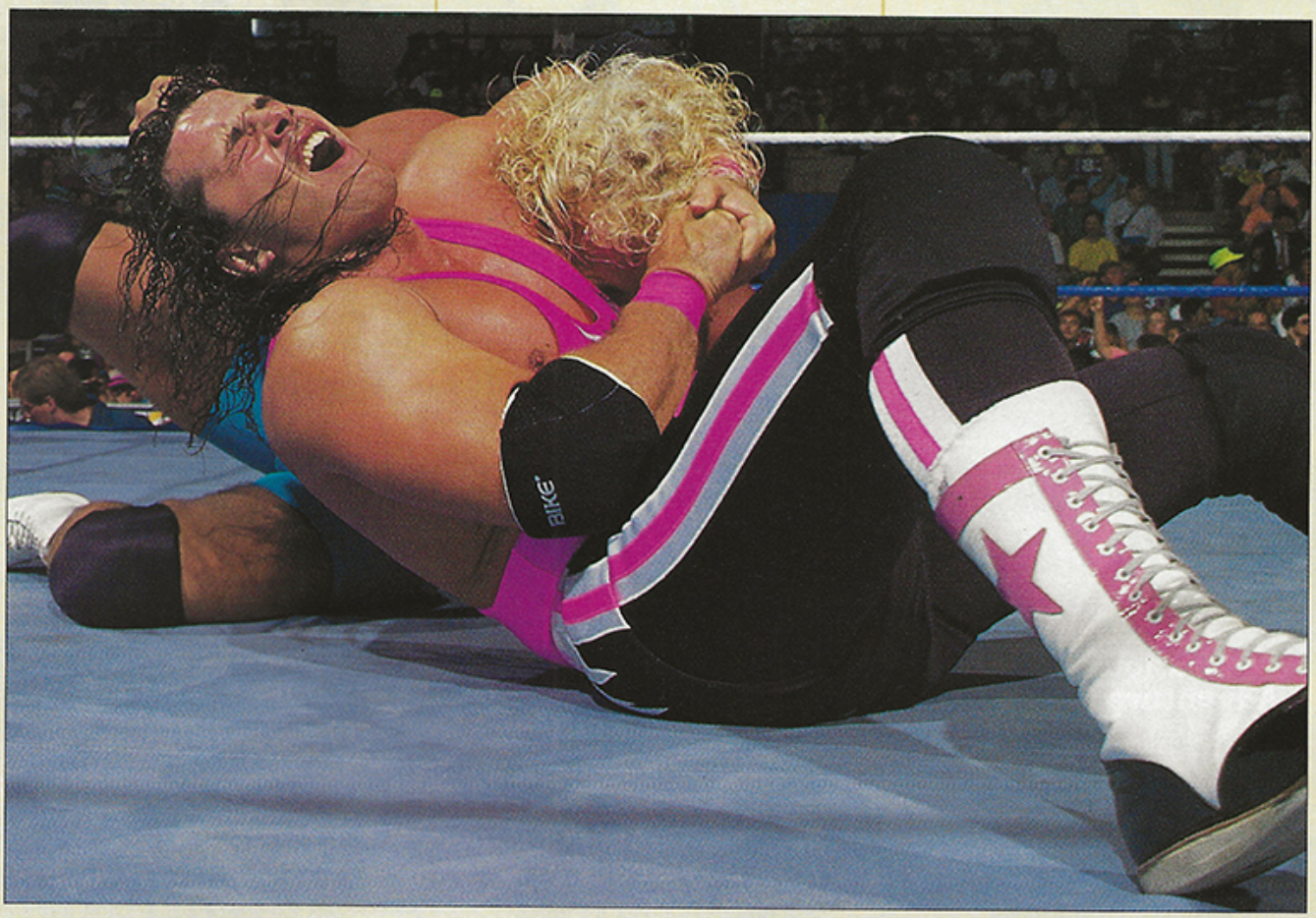
Bret "Hit Man" Hart vs. Mr. Perfect (SummerSlam 1991)

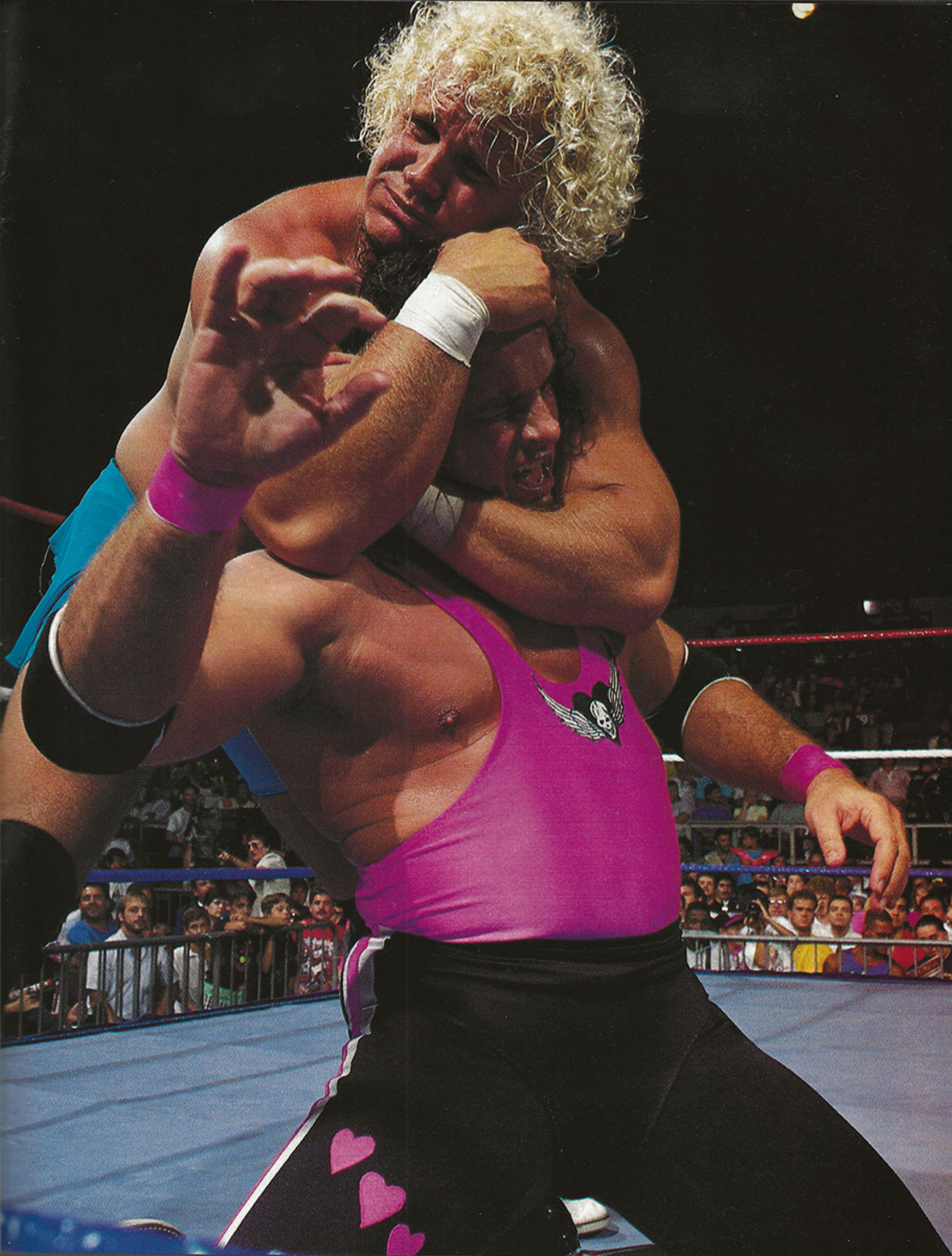
By Bill Banks

The routine never changed for Curt Hennig... the tossing of the towel, the flight of the gum through the air. It was all a necessary routine for the man regarded as "Perfect" to compete before each match. Very few times in the history of our sport has one match set the tone for what was to happen in the upcoming years—and little did Mr. Perfect realize that he would now be a part of one, too.

Routine? Bret Hart didn't have such a thing. The intensity on his face as he walked from the locker room was the only routine he had that night... an intensity and determination that were planted years ago deep in Stu Hart's dungeon in Canada. Mr. Perfect was no stranger to this determination as well—the great Larry "The Ax" Hennig had seen to that many years prior in the AWA. Never quite before in the history of our sport had the roads of two great second-generation wrestlers met in their prime... and on one rare August night in 1991, SummerSlam was such an instance.

This battle was years in the making, an event that was destined to happen even before "Mr. Perfect" Curt Hennig and Bret "Hit Man" Hart stepped foot into a ring. This is where the long journey would start for the Hit Man... a journey that would bring him to the top of the Federation where he would ultimately join the elite list of the Triple Crown Club in the World Wrestling Federation. Before the victories over Ric Flair, before the upsets over Yokozuna and before he took the gas out of Diesel power, Bret Hart stood alone as one of the





greatest Intercontinental Champions of all time. On this night at Madison Square Garden, Bret Hart would take his first step down that road by claiming his first Singles Title from Mr. Perfect.

As Bret entered the ring, Mr. Perfect pressed the Intercontinental Title firmly against the Hit Man's forehead—almost knocking him out of the ring with it. It was Hennig's way of saying "You want it? Come and get it!" Overconfidence? Was this Perfect's flaw? We would soon find out.

Bret was the first to strike as he hiplocked Perfect right out of the ring! Getting his bearings, Perfect got back into the ring and tried to take control of the match with a series of hair-pulling tactics against the Hit Man. But as Perfect would soon find out, Bret had a counter for it... along with much of Perfect's arsenal that night.

As the match progressed, Bret and Perfect became increasingly intense. What started out as a scientific match turned into an ugly brawl. Clearly upset at the hair pulling earlier in the match, Bret ripped Perfect's ring attire. In return, Hennig backed Hart into the corner and delivered a reverse knife-edge slap that many say can still be heard echoing in Madison Square Garden today.

The Hit Man mounted an offensive flurry that sent Hennig to the mat. Quickly putting an end to that with a shot to Bret's mouth, Perfect launched the Hit Man into the ringpost face first, a move that made the Garden crowd gasp. Bret went into the turnbuckle with such a force that it looked as if his head snapped back like a Pez dispenser. Roddy Piper, calling the broadcast with Gorilla Monsoon, felt this was the end for the Hit Man.

"The whole ring moved when Bret hit that turnbuckle," Piper said. "There's no way the Hit Man is gonna come back from that one, folks!"

And it appeared he wasn't. Lying on the mat, Bret grabbed his stomach as if someone had just reached into his lungs and ripped the air out of him. As Stu and Helen Hart looked on in terror, Perfect was easily able to do what he pleased with the Hit Man. Curt picked up his foe and gave him a Russian leg sweep. As Perfect climbed the ropes for an aerial attack, Bret got his wind back and followed him up. The two combatants jockeyed for position five feet over the mat... Perfect won that supremacy.

As Perfect locked up the Hit Man in the Perfectplex, his signature move, he took a long look at the Garden crowd. Maybe he wanted everyone to admire what he was about to do to Bret... maybe he was gloating—but the one thing he WAS doing was hesitating and that would be a mistake. Perfect did execute the Perfectplex moments later, but amazingly, for the first time in memory, someone had actually kicked out! The instant the referee slapped his hand down for the second time, Hart kicked free—the first opponent thus far in Hennig's career to do so! Bobby Heenan, calling the action with Piper, pretty much summed up the mood of everyone in the Garden at that point.

"NO ONE has EVER kicked out from the Perfectplex! No one!"

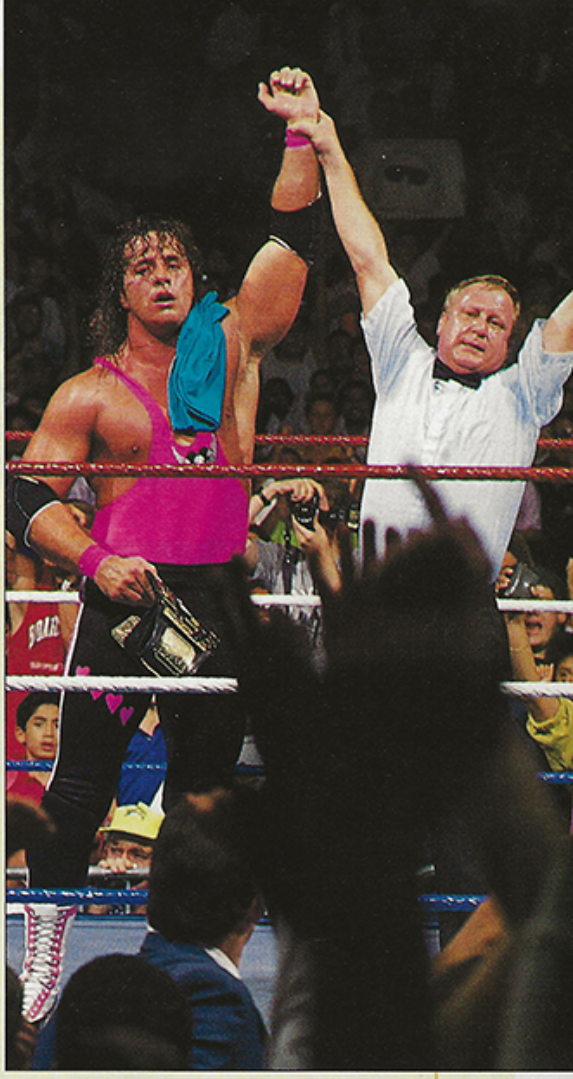
You could read Perfect's lips as he looked at the referee— "What's it going to take to keep this S.O.B down?!" Hart realized this would be his last chance to gain some momentum back before Hennig tried to finish him off.

Bret had gotten his second wind—which meant Mr. Perfect was in trouble. Bret grabbed Perfect's golden locks with such a look of hatred and launched Hennig across the ring into the turnbuckle in the unholiest of positions for any man. Bret attacked Perfect's legs, kicking him so hard that Perfect did carousels onto the mat.

Moments later, it was the end for Perfect. He was able to floor Bret with a punch, and when he tried to execute a legdrop, the Hit Man caught his legs and wrapped them up. At first, the crowd thought Bret was attempting some kind of figure four—but no one ever thought the Hit Man would stand up with the Sharpshooter!

Within seconds, the fans in the Garden and all over the world watched as a screaming Perfect gave up. His golden hair soaked with sweat, his face filled with pain and his back cracking under the pressure, the man known as Curt Hennig relinquished his hold on the Intercontinental Title. As Perfect tried to leave the ring, the Hit Man tore off the rest of Perfect's attire. Good thing for Curt he was wearing ring trunks underneath!

Back in the locker room with Lord Alfred Hayes, Bret was interviewed about his victory over Perfect. Looking into the TV camera, Bret uttered the words that put the exclamation mark on the night.

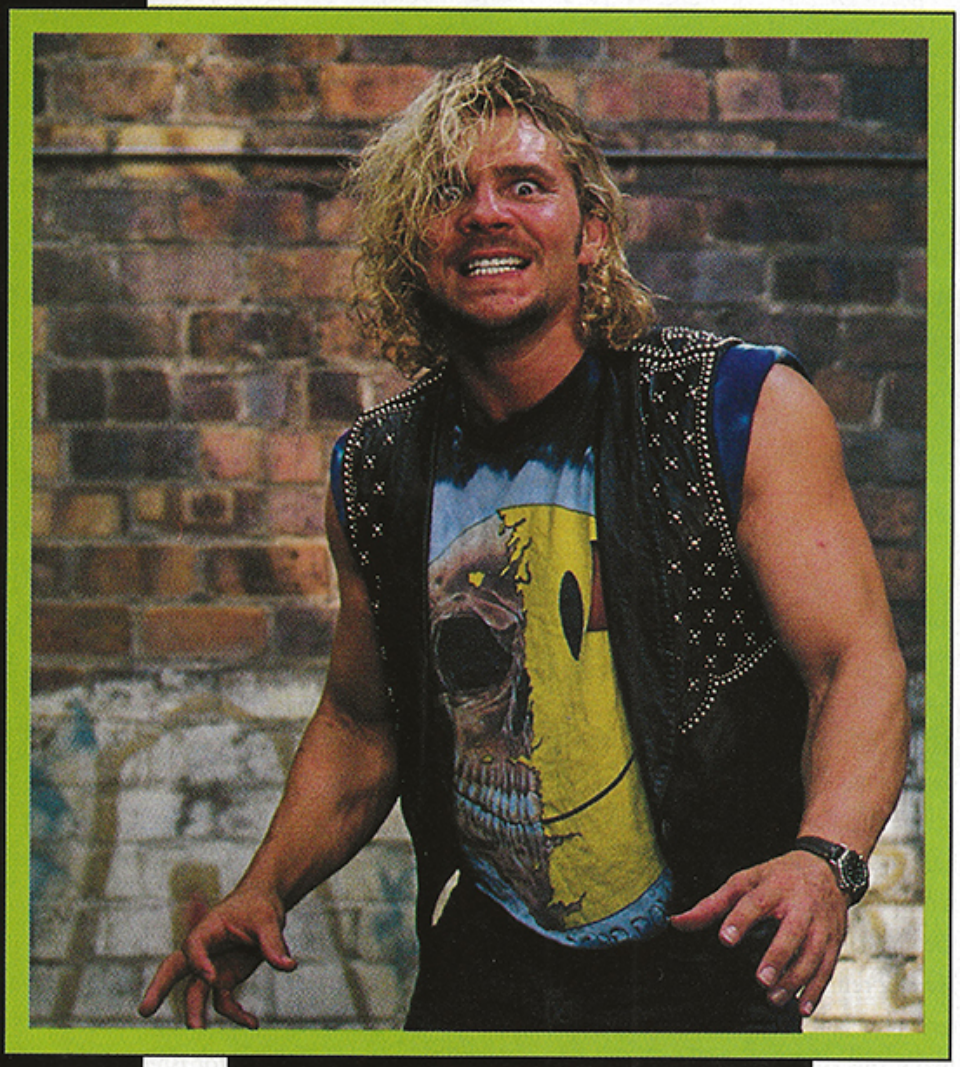


"I waited a long time for this match," Hart said. "I waited a long time to prove to Mr. Perfect that there is no such thing as perfection!"

Never before had there been a flaw in Perfect's career. "The Ax" never taught his son how it felt to lose... and in that one brief moment and for days to come, Mr. Perfect discovered that there was a flipside to winning he had never experienced before. On the other hand, all the days practicing in the dungeon finally paid off for Bret Hart. While he went to his mother and father after the match to hug them, the Hit Man silenced the critics who said he would never amount to anything without the services of Jim Neidhart. No longer held to the mold of a tag team competitor, Bret put the first step forward onto the road of a champion in the Federation. ■

FANTASY

"TIME BOMB" BRIAN PILLMAN



"TIME BOMB" BRIAN PILLMAN
HEIGHT: 6'1"
WEIGHT: 230 lbs.

At the 1996 *King of the Ring* tournament, fans all over the world caught a glimpse of the past when "Time Bomb" Brian Pillman and Stone Cold Steve Austin came within inches of each other... one going into the ring, while the other away from it. Former tag team partners known as the "Hollywood Blonds", both men had taken different paths that ultimately led them to the World Wrestling Federation.

As both of them looked at each other for that brief moment, Brian dragged his thumb slowly across his neck. A sign of encouragement for Austin to win... or the "Time Bomb's" way of telling Stone Cold to watch his back? You be the judge.

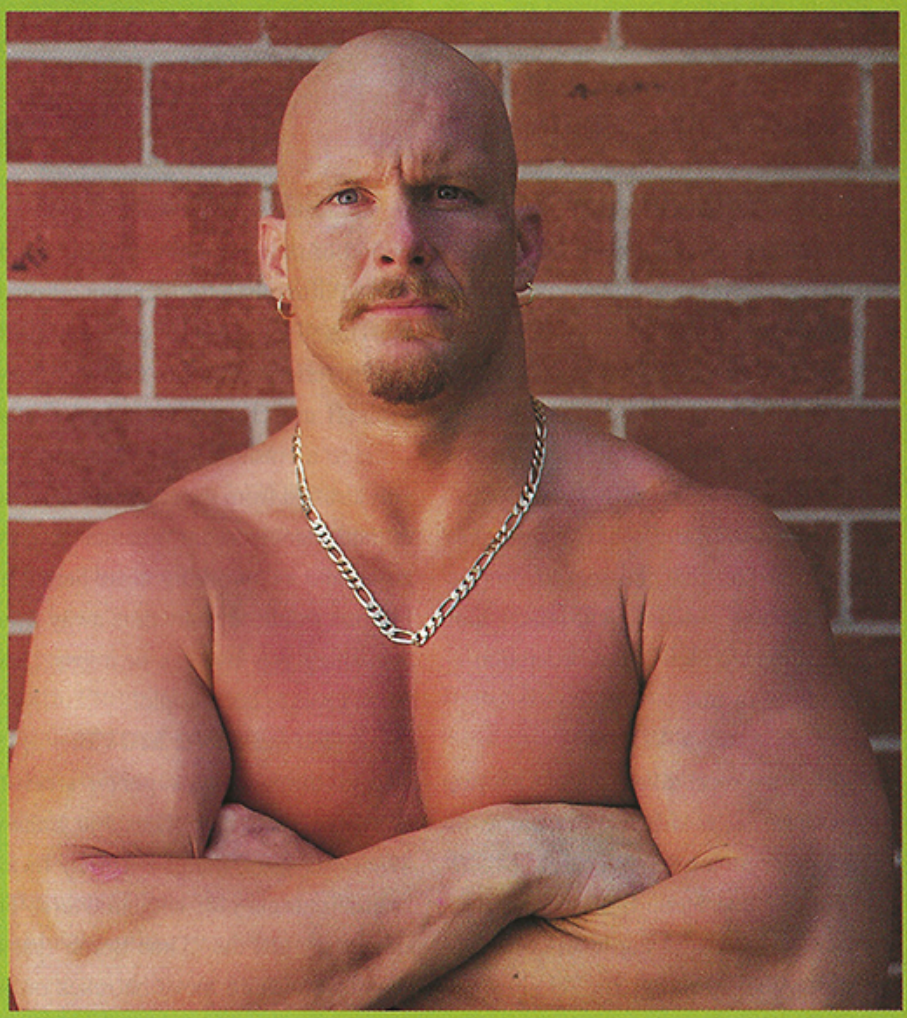
Recently, in an America Online interview, Austin stated, "I carried Pillman singlehandedly to the Tag

WARFARE

vs. STONE COLD STEVE AUSTIN

Team Titles." How did Pillman react to this statement? On a conference call involving some of the highest "suits" in the Federation, Brian blasted, "Austin may think that, but those are nothing but DELUSIONS! I was the mainstay all those years! I HAD TO KEEP HIM UNDER CONTROL BECAUSE HIS GOALS WERE SO UNREALISTIC! Who was the main influence in the Hollywood Blonds? BRIAN F...N' PILLMAN WAS!"

Once tag team partners turned bitter? An underlying jealousy between the two? Only Brian Pillman and Steve Austin know the real story. In this edition of Fantasy Warfare, we take a look at a match between two men who are total opposites—a ticking "Time Bomb" like Brian Pillman and a STONE COLD technician in Steve Austin.



STONE COLD STEVE AUSTIN
HEIGHT: 6'2"
WEIGHT: 252 lbs.

STRENGTHS:

Spontaneous unpredictability. What better phrase to describe a man known as a ticking "Time Bomb"? Throughout his career as a football player to a professional wrestler, Brian Pillman has answered to only one person—himself! This is why you can't possibly put a finger on what he's going to do next! And let's not kid ourselves—Pillman isn't some gumshoe rookie. The "Time Bomb" has butted heads with many of today's ring legends... and unseated most of them for championship belts. At the age of 34, the "Time Bomb" still has quite a lot of exploding to do.

WEAKNESSES:

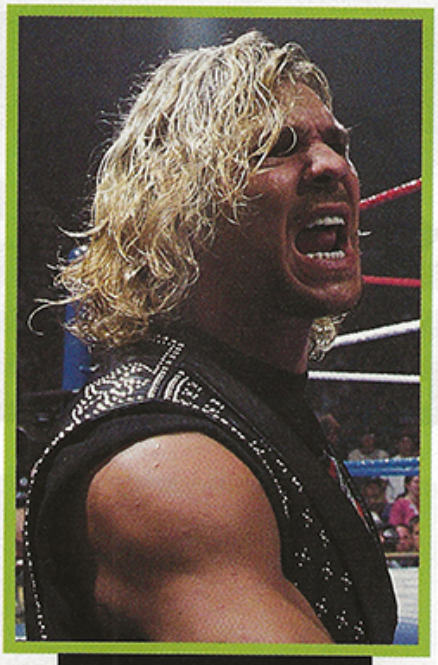
Temper, Temper, Temper... Brian Pillman has a short fuse that would put the likes of Bruno Sammartino and Pedro Morales to shame! If you back him into a corner, you can bet the house he will come out like a rabid wolverine. At this point, this is where the "Time Bomb" would most likely make a mistake. Also, the fact that the scars from his auto accident remain could hinder him against the big men of the Federation—including Austin!

KEY WINS:

Perhaps the most talked about victories of Brian Pillman's career came in World Championship Wrestling, where in fact, he and Stone Cold were one of the most successful tag team combinations in WCW history. The "Hollywood Blonds," as they were called, easily found holes in every tag team who faced them in the ring. As well as tag team success, Pillman was no stranger to the singles circuit... winning numerous championship titles before coming to the Federation.

KEY LOSSES:

There can be no greater loss than the ability to get in the ring for an extended period of time for any wrestler... this is what Pillman's auto accident resulted in. The "Time Bomb" prided himself on his reflexes and his ability to keep himself athletically sound—but that came to a crashing halt the moment he was airlifted from the scene of his twisted and mangled car. Whether you are an athlete or "working class hero", as Pillman would say, any time away from something you love can be a loss... and Brian loves to hurt people!



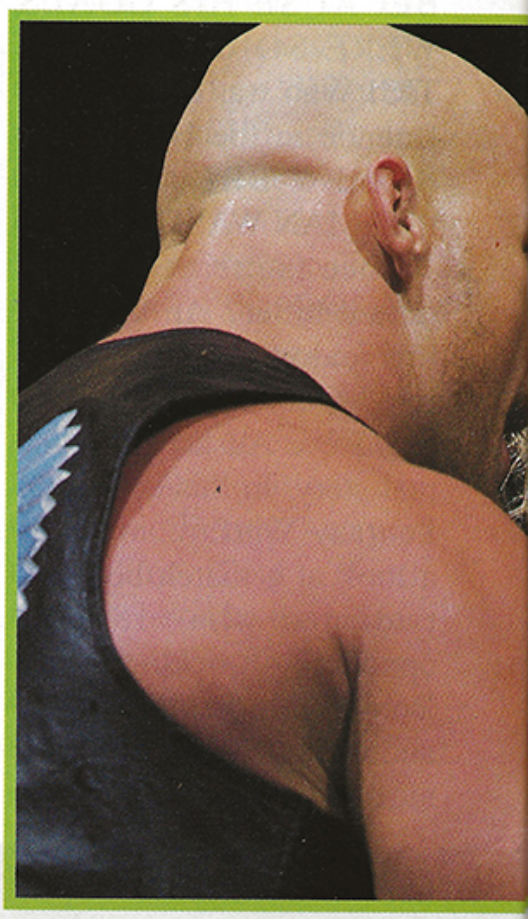
"TIME BOMB" BRIAN PILLMAN

FINISHING MOVE:

Being compared to superior athletes like Bret "Hit Man" Hart and Shawn Michaels puts Brian Pillman in an "elite" category of ring masters. To simply say that the "Time Bomb" has a singular finishing move he relies on in crunch time would be incorrect. Pillman has all the necessary tools at his disposal to get the job done. The speed, the power, the flexibility... he can either put you down with a brutal boot to the face, or he can rely on his technical skills to wear you down... Either way, this "Time Bomb" is stepping over you to leave the ring when all is said and done!

STRATEGY:

Brian Pillman will always be Brian Pillman... with a "Time Bomb" there's just no way to predict how to go about beating you! Steve Austin is a man who loves pain... his high threshold for it makes him so stubborn to beat. A prime example coming after his win over Marc Mero at *King of the Ring*... his lip busted wide open and bleeding, Stone Cold seemed to get stronger! After witnessing the few key losses that Stone Cold has—to Savio Vega—Pillman would realize that something "unexpected" is the best way to leave Stone Cold "out cold" in the ring... and we all know Brian Pillman is good for a little "unforeseen" behavior! Can Pillman overcome the scars of his accident to beat Stone Cold? Steve Austin is at his peak in the Federation... while the "Time Bomb" is just starting to tick slowly.



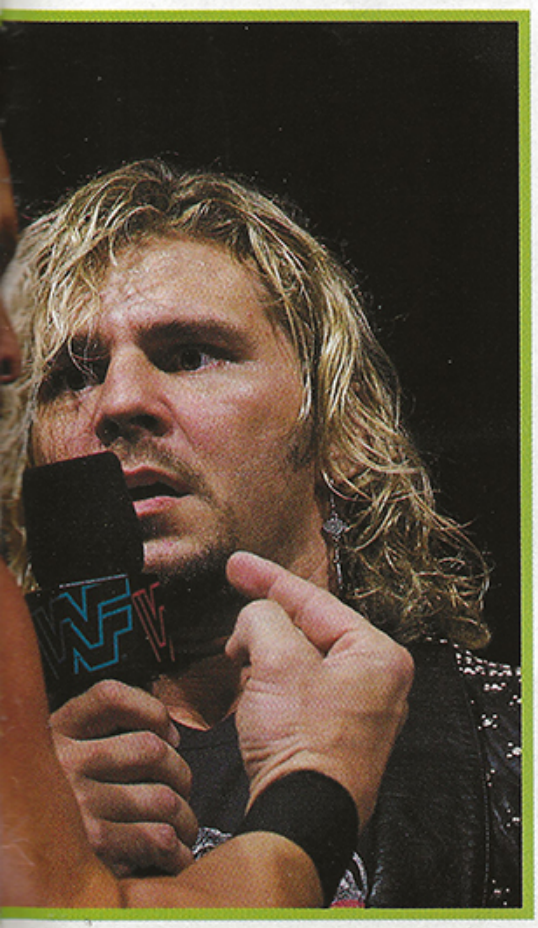
STRENGTHS:

You don't have to read far into his name to realize Steve Austin doesn't give a damn about how much pain you might be in! Perhaps his greatest strength is that he is completely null and void of any compassion whatsoever. You might be crying... you may be bleeding... your limbs may be broken and hanging on by a muscle... but Stone Cold just keeps pouring the punishment on!

WEAKNESSES:

Lack of respect, plain and simple. The only man Steve Austin respects is himself—and if you are in his way, you had better move, or he'll knock you down to move you! Treating people like dirt is a trademark that Austin is proud of... but it may come back to bite him some day. We saw the way he treated a legend like Jake Roberts after his victory at the *King of the Ring*—that shows you how much he gives a damn about anyone. If he loses respect for Brian Pillman, Stone Cold might find himself saying, "I respect you, Time-Bomb Man!"

STONE COLD STEVE AUSTIN



KEY WINS:

Let's start with being 1996 *King of the Ring*! Never before has any superstar trounced his opposition in quite the same way Austin did at the annual tournament. He trampled over Bob "Spark Plugg" Holly, Savio Vega, Wildman Marc Mero AND Jake "The Snake" Roberts to get the crown! Now if that's not impressive, what is? Also, the fact that he conquered the tag team ranks with Pillman in World Championship Wrestling, and the many singles titles in his trophy case have proven that Austin gives out licks and keeps on ticking!

KEY LOSSES:

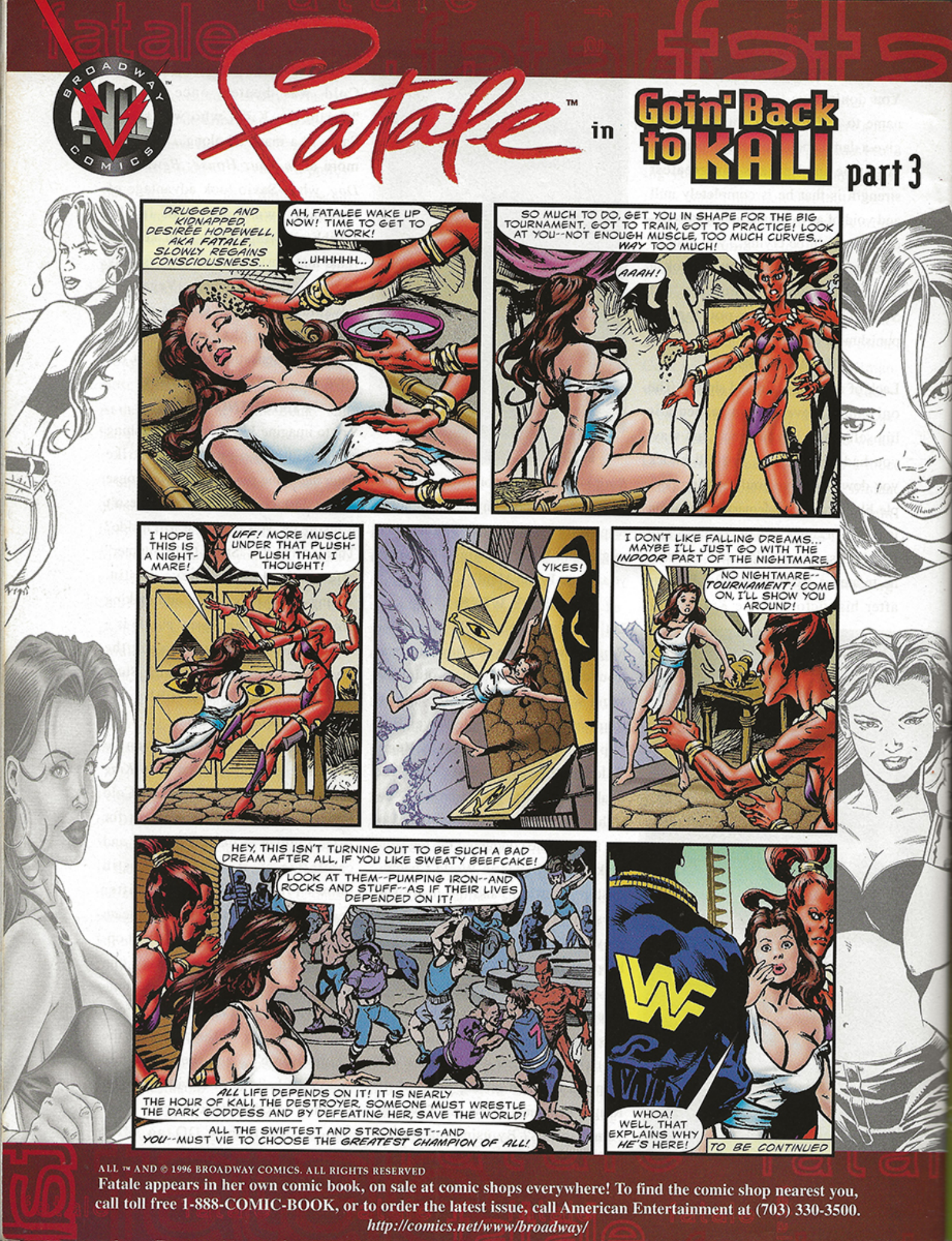
The Caribbean Legend Savio Vega has been the only man thus far in Stone Cold's career who has been able to put a blemish on the King of the Ring's stat sheet. How did Savio accomplish this? By using unexpected and surprising strategies. Analyzing his two major losses to Savio, Stone Cold was beaten once by the "Caribbean Kid", who was really Savio in a mask all along... and once more at *In Your House: Beware of Dog*, when Savio took advantage of Austin's own game plan in the Caribbean Strap Match. But keep in mind that Austin was never physically beaten in these matches... Vega took advantage of Stone Cold's mental state to beat him! Quite simply, the Caribbean Sensation out-thought the 1996 *King of the Ring*!

FINISHING MOVE:

Try to imagine Jose Canseco smashing your mouth in... one smooth strike from the home run-hitting powerhouse with a 33-inch aluminum bat. Doesn't it just make you feel all warm inside? This is what the "Stone Cold Stunner" effectively does for Steve Austin. Taking a 300-pound man and making his teeth look like a jigsaw puzzle is a very unpleasant thought to say the least. When you get hit with the Stunner... SON... PARTY'S OVER!

STRATEGY:

Being the sound ring technician he is—a title gained from the 1996 *King of the Ring* tournament—Stone Cold Steve Austin would simply wait for Brian Pillman to make a mistake and capitalize on it. You see, Austin knows Pillman VERY well—after years of teaming up together, tag team partners are often each other's best opponents in the long run—each one knows the other's weaknesses. Stone Cold would just sit back and wait for a crack to appear in the armor of the "Time Bomb"... and then he would smash the hell out of it with a sledgehammer! HOWEVER, on the other hand, time bombs DO go off... anytime... anywhere. ■



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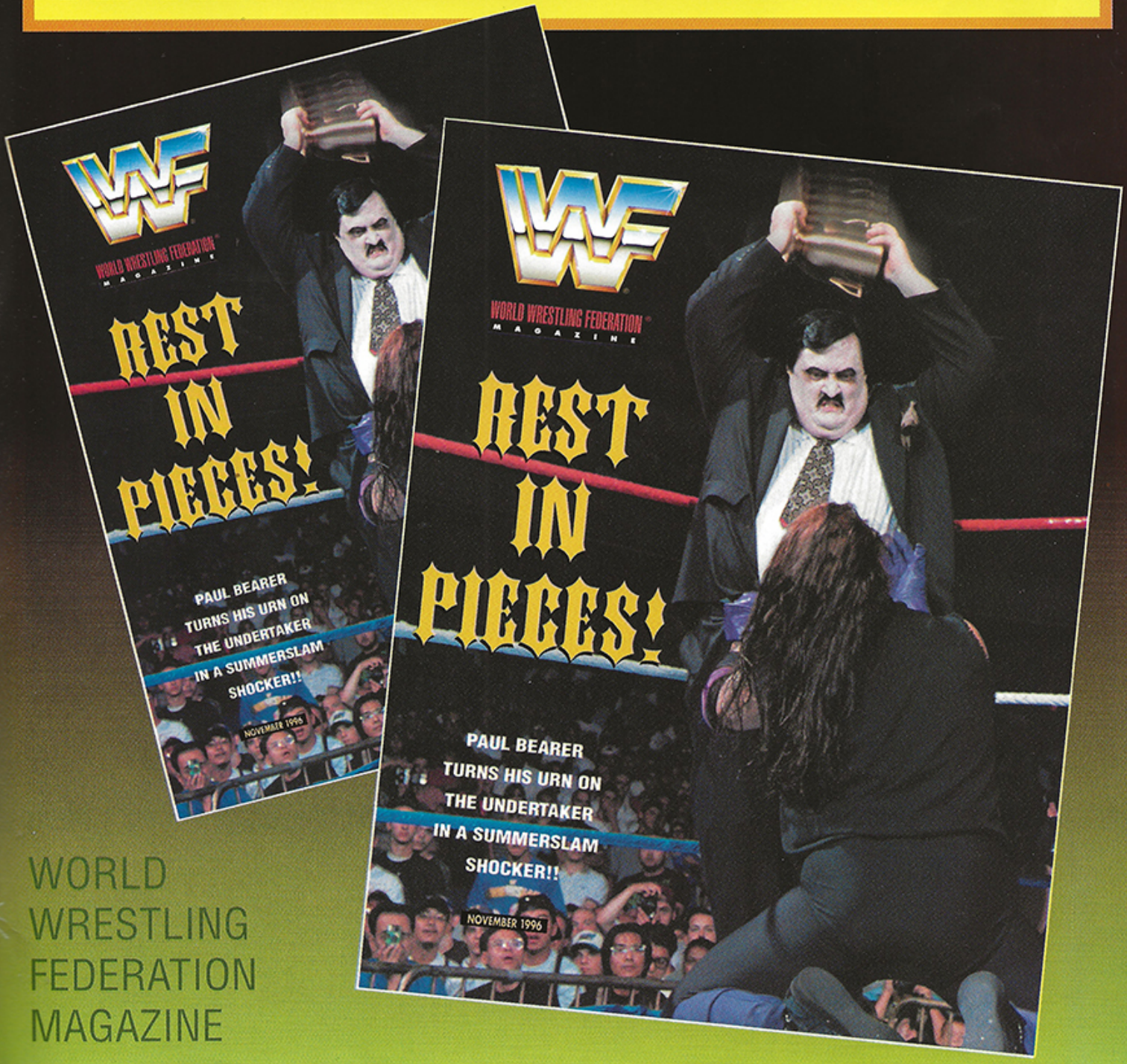

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